



HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT

**H. P. LOVECRAFT**

## **SELECTED LETTERS**

**1932-1934**

**Edited by August Derleth and James Turner**



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## PREFACE

**D**URING the period covered by this fourth volume of selected letters, Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) settled into a pattern of existence which would serve for the few remaining years of his lifetime. He continued to live quietly and frugally in Providence, Rhode Island, residing first with an elder aunt, Mrs. F. C. Clark, and later with Mrs. Annie E. Phillips Gamwell, his younger aunt and only other surviving member of the family. Working at night and sleeping by day, H. P. Lovecraft was a hapless prisoner in his own study during the cold northern winters and a wraith-like wanderer savoring the shadows of old Providence on late summer evenings. Lovecraft's essential position as epistolarian/recluse did not preclude occasional trips and personal meetings with friends and correspondents. Apart from frequent antiquarian excursions through his beloved New England, he customarily traveled to New York City during the Christmas holidays to visit the old Kalem Club "gang," while his summer vacations usually were spent in Florida where he was the guest of Robert H. Barlow, a youthful admirer and distant cousin. During an era of economic depression in which literary employment of any kind was increasingly precarious, Lovecraft endeavored to sustain a meager subsistence through sporadic revision work, although his only dependable source of income was a rapidly dwindling patrimonial reserve. Remuneration from his fictional writing became ever more infrequent; for the years represented by this volume, he completed only *The Dreams in the Witch-House*, *The Thing on the Doorstep*, and *Through the Gates of the Silver Key*, the last a collaboration induced by E. Hoffmann Price. While he was becoming a legend in his own time as originator of the Cthulhu Mythos, Lovecraft manifested recurrent doubt and dissatisfaction with his crea-

tive work, thinking it too uncompromisingly noncommercial for the popular magazines, and yet unworthy for hardcover preservation as serious macabre literature. Even in the domain of supernatural horror which he had chosen to make his own, Howard Phillips Lovecraft once again had become *The Outsider*.

The most significant occurrence in Lovecraft's outwardly uneventful existence during this period had its origin in personal tragedy. After the death of his semi-invalid Aunt Lillian in 1932, Lovecraft under pressure of poverty moved from the boarding house at 10 Barnes Street to the upper floor of a Georgian dwelling near Brown University which he shared with his remaining aunt, Mrs. Gamwell. The almost incredulous delight which pervades the letters at this point forms the sincere expression of a man who previously had lost his ancestral estate, who had lived with the agony of that loss for twenty-nine years, and who now could restore, on the modest scale afforded by his straitened circumstances, some semblance of "home" to his new quarters at 66 College Street.

Lovecraft's maternal ancestry had been the old Rhode Island Phillips family, and after his father suffered a breakdown in 1893, Lovecraft and his mother lived with grandfather Whipple Phillips at 454 Angell Street. During the 1890s Whipple Phillips was a successful real estate broker yet also a refined and cultivated gentleman, who thus enabled his grandson to enjoy a genteel childhood in an imposing residence which Lovecraft once described as "a beautiful and spacious edifice, with stable and grounds, the latter approaching a park in the beauty of the walks and trees." Whipple Phillips' death in 1904 precipitated a period of financial disintegration and unremitting material declension for Lovecraft and his mother, the beginning of a gradual impoverishment evidenced through the surrender of the family home at 454 Angell Street. The emotional crisis of this event for the sensitive, introverted young man is conveyed retrospectively in a 1934 letter: "My mother and I moved into a five-room-and-attic flat two squares farther east . . . and for the first time I knew what a congested, servantless home—with another family in the same house—was . . . I felt that I had lost my entire adjustment to the cosmos—for what indeed was HPL without the remembered rooms and hallways and hangings and staircases and statuary and paintings and yard and walls and cherry trees and fountain and ivy-grown arch and stable and garden and all the rest?"

At this point the Lovecraftian Dream-Quest is invoked in earnest as

the dispossessed dreamer begins to effect an imaginative escape from the modern twentieth century which had left behind the aristocratic Phillips family. At an early age Lovecraft embraced a philosophy of mechanistic materialism in which the world and its inhabitants were perceived as mere aggregations of atoms inexorably organized in accordance with natural laws of physical science that are everywhere always the same. Lovecraft records that "my recognition of the deterministic automatism of the whole cosmos, and the ridiculous insignificance and futility of all human actions, gave me an entirely new perspective. I could no longer see anything *personal* or *responsible* in anything that anybody did, and began to look on all mankind impersonally. . . ." Once the universe has been thus objectified, and the vicissitudes of existence accommodated through a posture of remote, cosmic indifference, it then is possible to *withdraw* from the very world and its depersonalized denizens: "I've always had a subconscious feeling that everything since the eighteenth century is unreal and illusory—a sort of grotesque nightmare or caricature. People seem to me more or less like ironic shadows or phantoms—as if I could make them (together with all their modern houses and inventions and perspectives) dissolve into thin aether by merely pinching myself awake and shouting at them, 'Why, damn ye, you're not even born, and won't be born for a century and a half! God Save the King, and his Colony of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations!'" Lovecraft's autistic existence in the eighteenth century is already suggested by the preceding passage; to this may be added his sense of placement in ancient Rome, his return to the early 454 Angell Street period in recurrent dreams, his defiance of the "galling tyranny" of the natural order in his macabre fiction, and his frequent antiquarian withdrawals into the "primal countryside"—a countryside unaffected by the advances of civilization and thus evocative of an earlier era, an era of times and days more congenial to Lovecraft.

The decline and fall of the Phillips family from its position of economic and social eminence will also serve to elucidate Lovecraft's often intense reaction to any emergent element in society that apparently constituted a challenge to the genteel New England tradition. "Change is the enemy of everything really worth cherishing. It is the remover of landmarks, the destroyer of all which is homelike and comforting, and the constant symbol and reminder of decay and death. It is change which makes one old before his time by snatching away everything he has



known, and substituting a new environment to which he can never become adjusted." Lovecraft's criticism of the modern machine civilization, and of the commercial psychology, new immigration, and standardized culture which it spawned, is the response of a man who, having lost his home and most of the tangible accouterments thereto, steadfastly maintained those intangible values which could not be wrested from him—his essential pride in the ancestral tradition, in the old New England culture, and in the Nordic race-stock. "What is any man," he once asked, "but the impress of his home and lineage?" Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Gent. was never one to abandon his lineage; now with the remnants of family, books, and possessions in the upstairs flat at 66 College Street, he was as near as he ever again would be to "home."

When judged by the machine civilization of his age, Lovecraft was desperately poor, an abject failure even by depression standards. How could it be otherwise for the pauper/recluse who had repudiated the capitalistic system and its attendant commercial values? In a 1929 letter to Maurice W. Moe, Lovecraft articulated his own criteria for human excellence: "What a man *does for pay* is of little significance. What he *is*, as a sensitive instrument responsive to the world's beauty, is everything! That is his true measure; and whatever contributes toward its refinement is of intrinsic value to him, no matter how little it may affect his material or industrial status. A poor but cultivated man is, absolutely, the superior of a rich boor whose responses to the cosmos are limited to a few stereotyped physical and emotional reactions. I never ask a man what his business is, for it never interests me. What I ask him about are his thoughts and dreams. . . ." When evaluated by his own aesthetic-intellectual-oneiric standards, H. P. Lovecraft reveals a repository of riches not vouchsafed to the mercenary miser of material possessions. His thoughts, his dreams—such was the true wealth by which he endured, the wealth which he shared with all who wrote to him, and the wealth which, long after the mortal Dream-Quest had ended, would persist.

JAMES TURNER

Collinsville, Illinois

15 May 1974

## SELECTED LETTERS IV



517. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Friday, 1932

Jonckheer Arminius:—

.....  
Oh, say—a thought! ! Rare stranger in the Theobald bean! I know a book—2 volumes—that would be a gold mine for you in concocting cadaverous features for M. de Grandin! It is a series of essays by one Sargent (I forget his other handles) called *Dealings With the Dead*, and probably containing more funereal, ghoulish, and mortuary lore culled from all history, ancient, mediaeval, and modern, than any other collection betwixt four cloth covers. The essays, purporting to be by the sexton of old Trinity Church in Boston, (not the present Richardson romanesque pile in Copley Sq.) originally appeared in the *Boston Transcript* in the 'forties, when that austere journal was young; but were issued in book form about 1850. ....

..... I'm interested in this doughnut controversy, and wonder just how reliable my standards of comparison are. What they call a doughnut in the farther south is lighter and fluffier than the old Novanglian article, but in New York I have seen on sale doughnuts of essentially the classic Yankee pattern. Yes—and come to think of it, many *chain stores* down south *do* sell Yankee doughnuts; such having been bought by Whitehead at the Clearwater Fla. Piggly-Wiggly. Is it possible that the original Dutch-Yankee differences were so slight that the modern machine-made product is a sort of debased hybrid about as much like the one as like the other? It is probably thirty years since I have eaten a home-made doughnut—and even then they were Celtic or Scandinavian (though Yankee supervised) kitchen products perhaps varying from the oldest Rhodinsular standard. At present there is no discernible physico-chemical difference betwixt the A & P products labelled "doughnuts" and those labelled "fried cakes"—the entire distinction being architectural. As for times for doughnut eating—all I can say is that my breakfast each morning consists of 2 doughnuts and cheese .... 365 days per year except when I'm where I can't get such homely fare. ....

Yr. obt. grandsire,  
O'Casey

518. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

Castle of Udolpho  
1932

Dear Bernardus:—

..... I'd a great deal rather have Machen as he is than not have him at all! What Machen probably likes about perverted and forbidden things is their departure from and hostility to the commonplace. To him—whose imagination is not cosmic—they represent what Pegana and the River Yann represent to Dunsany, whose imagination *is* cosmic. People whose minds are—like Machen's—steeped in the orthodox myths of religion, naturally find a poignant fascination in the conception of things which religion brands with outlawry and horror. Such people take the artificial and obsolete concept of "sin" seriously, and find it full of dark allurements. On the other hand, people like myself, with a realistic and scientific point of view, see no charm or mystery whatever in things banned by religious mythology. We recognise the primitiveness and meaninglessness of the religious attitude, and in consequence find no element of attractive defiance or significant escape in those things which happen to contravene it. The whole idea of "sin", with its overtones of unholy fascination, is in 1932 simply a curiosity of intellectual history. The filth and perversion which to Machen's obsoletely orthodox mind meant profound defiances of the universe's foundations, mean to us only a rather prosaic and unfortunate species of organic maladjustment—no more frightful, and no more interesting, than a headache, a fit of colic, or an ulcer on the big toe. Now that the veil of mystery and the hokum of spiritual significance have been stripped away from such things, they are no longer adequate motivations for phantasy or fear-literature. We are obliged to hunt up other symbols of imaginative escape—hence the vogue of interplanetary, dimensional, and other themes whose element of remoteness and mystery has not yet been destroyed by advancing knowledge. ....

Yr. most obt. hble. Servt.,  
Grandpa

519. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Boston  
Jan. 2, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

Extra! Extra! Special! Are you suddenly dead? We've just had a vision of you as a decomposed corpse hanging head downward in a Romanesque crypt! If this is a correct telepathic impression, let us know at once by special delivery air mail!

.. Grandpa HP, W. Paul Cook

520. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 16, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... As for current political & social change—I don't believe the present tendencies indicate any more than closely analytical people (which, of course, excludes superficial business men & bombastic politicians) have always expected since the wide application of machinery to industry & transportation. Certain causes produce definite effects—& Marx & other sociologists outlined more or less inevitable consequences since the middle of the 19th century. Moreover, all cultures perish sooner or later through sheer collective senility—& the more dynamic they are, the quicker they go. Comparing the life of the existing western civilisation with those of the Persian, Greek, Carthaginian, Roman, & other civilisations of the past, we see that it is about time for the early stages of decline to become manifest, even



without the invention of machinery. But of course the beginning of decline does not mean the last chapter. Decay is usually a slow process, & in our case may extend from 500 to 1000 years. What would mark the *end* of the civilisation would be a relapse into a feudal or tribal state, with the later emergence of a new group of freshly mixed race-stock, newly metamorphosed language, & basically novel set of folkways & institutions. None of the existing changes is really basic. Empires are always temporary things with shifting boundaries & varying political systems. The Hellenic world had no unity or stability whatsoever during its greatest period—and that was the foremost civilisation our planet has yet seen. What is happening today is simply a necessary readjustment of institutions to fit a radically different set of actual living & working conditions & a tremendously enlarged field of knowledge. It is very probable that in 50 to 100 years a new approximate equilibrium will have been reached—the forces of civilisation being once more brought into relationship with the realities. It was so after the fall of Rome, after the Renaissance, & after the French Revolution. There is no need of worrying about civilisation so long as the language & general art tradition survive. As for India—it really does not matter what becomes of it so long as no outside power gets hold of it & makes it a menace to Western civilisation. The Hindoos themselves are too static & inert to do any harm outside their own boundaries. But it would be well for the Western world to leave India out of consideration as a stable economic reliance. All we can reasonably expect is to keep it *harmless*—i.e., out of Russian or Japanese hands. In many ways the readjustment of civilisation is to be welcomed, for it will eliminate a great deal of absurd pretence, insincerity, & obscurantism, such as always pile up after a culture has outgrown its forms.

Trust your literary arrangements will continue to progress smoothly—though you must remember that it is only the *creation* of art which is important. What becomes of it after it is evolved is of relatively little significance—and I'm sure I never expect to see my junk in collected form. . . . .

De Sitter's view of the universe is extremely interesting & significant. Probably the expansive effect now perceived is in part illusory & in part due to one phase of a general pulsation of alternate expansions & contractions. In general, there seems to be no reason for regarding the cosmos as other than a self-contained & unchanging field of force—a basic

condition of entity which always has existed & always will exist, & whose substance involves a rhythmic & perpetual rearrangement of parts in the manner of a kaleidoscope. . . . .

Best wishes—

Yrs most sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

521. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Providence, R. I.  
January 16, 1932

Dear Mr. Howard:—

. . . . .  
... Have you heard of the new magazine of weird fiction to be issued by *Carl Swanson*. *Washburn*. N. D.? I don't believe the remuneration will be very high, but it might prove a good market for things rejected elsewhere. I've sent in two old stories of mine—though they may not be taken. Congratulations, by the way, on your entrance to the Clayton market! I haven't tried this any more, for I feel convinced that Clayton (if not Bates) is temperamentally opposed to material of the mood and style I produce. Possibly I may try again later on if I can get time to produce a greater variety of material. . . .

. . . . .  
Your instinctive sense of placement with the Picts is certainly a most puzzling and unusual phenomenon, though I dare say a psycho-analyst could unearth at least a few significant clues from your fund of early impressions. For one thing—I believe we all have a certain half-latent yearning toward that which is *most unlike* ourselves; a wistful exoticism based on man's natural revolt against the accustomed and the commonplace. Just as we fly to fantastic fiction to escape a sense of the limitations of life, so do we often like to merge our imaginations with some stream of life other than that which monotonously engulfs us. Of course, we don't look too far afield, since beyond certain limits alien races and cultures have too few points in common with ours to give us any sense of real life. But we do like to think ourselves now and then into some

exotic milieu which is as far away as is possible without forfeiting some illusion of similarity. Thus many boys lead a dream-life as Indians—the idealised and sympathetic sort popularised by Cooper; who represent an opposite racial type, yet who also represent the familiar American landscape and the familiar noble sentiments put into them by novelists. I've known many boys (who never saw a redskin except in the circus) who try their best to merge themselves into the stream of Indian traditions. Then again—how many young dream-Arabs have the *Arabian Nights* bred! I ought to know, since at the age of 5 I was one of them! I had not then encountered Graeco-Roman myth, but found in Lang's *Arabian Nights* a gateway to glittering vistas of wonder and freedom. It was then that I invented for myself the name of Abdul Alhazred, and made my mother take me to all the Oriental curio shops and fit me up an Arabian corner in my room. Had I not stumbled upon Graeco-Roman myths immediately afterward, my sense of dream-placement might easily have been with the Caliphate of Bagdad. As it is, I still retain just enough of half-placement to feel a certain homelikeness in Saracenic art and ways, whereas other Oriental ways seem wholly alien. In the Crusades, I find myself often siding with the Saracens instead of with my own blood ancestors—for were not the Saracens the kin of my old friends Haroun al Raschid, Ali Baba, Nouredin, and so on? . . . . .

Your remarks on games and sports interested me greatly, and I certainly agree that football is a highly strategic and intellectual as well as physically daring sort of contest. My interest in things of this kind might have been much greater had my health in youth been such as to permit my participation—for I share your disgust at mere spectatorship and vicarious fortitude. I suppose my primary coolness toward games lies in the fact that they are only symbolically connected with any larger end. Probably I lack the primal zest for struggle *per se*—for I always want a conflict to decide some historic issue. I take a delight in thinking of a Greek at Marathon hacking away at a Persian, for that represents the upholding of the Aryan West against the Asiatic East; but when the pair are transferred from the battlefield to a prize ring where nothing but a purse is decided, I find my interest in the combat rapidly waning. I can thrill when a splendidly marshalled Roman legion outmaneuvers the Macedonian phalanx of a Pyrrhus—for that means the assertion of ROMAN supremacy over a decaying Hellenistic world; but when the affair is moved to a stadium with the legion called Harvard and the

phalanx called Yale, I can't keep up an abstract zest for the adroit tactics and intrepid alertness. That is a typical defect in my personality—doubtless arising from the fact that while I have always had an active imagination, I have never had any surplus (or even sufficiency till I was over thirty) of physical energy. In youth—between breakdowns—I had just about energy enough to keep on my feet and no more; hence all emotions based on an exuberance of physical energy could be known to me only objectively. Historic imagination lent a glory to battles waged for definite racial or national issues; but only a "sporting sense"—a sense of abstract competition (or perhaps a very strong symbolic sense)—could have lent a similar glory to athletic sports. And that sporting sense was left out of my emotional composition. With such a dual lack—of physical energy on the one hand and of competitive interest on the other—I probably came to regard sports as a sort of wasteful use of energies which could better be applied to real issues. I realised only objectively, and could not feel subjectively, that they actually had a symbolic function to fulfill and that they often furnished excellent training both physical and psychological for the real contests of history. But I think I always respected athletics for I recognised their place in history as attributes of all the great civilisations, especially the Greek.

Yrs. most sincerely—H P L

522. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Tower of Narghan in Pnath

Hour when the Dogs bay at the opening  
of the Topmost Circular Window

Jany. 28, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I think you'll like Wandrei's novel—especially the poetically cosmic second half. One of the chapters about takes the prize for underground horror. Oddly, I can't recognise any chapter containing the first part of *Something from Above*. . . . .

Yrs. in the ritual of Y'ha-nthlei

E'ch-Pi-El.



523. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Many-columned Arcades of Weed-grown Y'ha-nthlei,  
in the Hour of the Unseen Howling.

Jany. 29, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

..... In tale after tale I can see how I virtually rub the central horror in, where a better author would be content to hint or adumbrate it in a manner far more productive of the desired shiver. Machen's *The White People* for example merely suggests the monstrous reason for the child's suicide; so that perhaps half the readers never "get" the crux of the tale at all. If he had tried to make the matter utterly plain, as he did in *The Great God Pan*, he would have sacrificed much of the present power of the story. I must stand by my opinion of that tale—to which I would not even begin to compare my *Colour* or *Cthulhu*. That & Blackwood's *Willows* are in a class by themselves. My experimenting has not produced very good results—but I shall try again on another theme. One eventually gets stale writing out the same plot over & over again. At present I have on my hands a slow-moving atmospheric affair of 68 pages entitled *The Shadow over Innsmouth* which I shall set aside for later recasting & possible condensation. I seem to have lost touch with the *short story* mood, for whatever I attempt seems to insist on spinning itself out to novelette length. I have, I think, been confining recent tales too much to a single pattern. I'd better take a rest from fiction for a while, & then start afresh from some of the notes in my dark plot-book—developing themes without any professional designs, hence without any unconscious explanatory catering to the slow perceptions of the *WT* clientele.

You certainly succeed in preserving the pictorial quality despite the omnipresent demand for "eckshun", & are exceedingly fortunate in being able to bridge the gulf. Whether I could do the same is very doubtful; for as I have said, the concept of the *dream* is almost always paramount in what I write. The most I can subjectively realise in the field of "eckshun" is the phenomenon of *flight & pursuit*—especially the sort in which the quarry does not quite see or identify that which is

pursuing. To have my "hero" turn on his intangible nemesis & stage a wholesale slaughter in the Robert E. Howard fashion would be beyond the powers of my imagination.

Yours in the adoration of the Black Flame—  
E'ch-Pi-El

524. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Monday

Feby. 1932

Dear A. W.:—

... Both of the tales are splendid—indeed, *Five Alone* is such a magnificently balanced bit of atmosphere and inevitability that I don't see how any fully awake and sober editor could possibly reject it. The steady growth of your work is surely heartening to see, and I can easily imagine what your place in the literary field will be a decade hence. About the objection to the odd constructions typified by "she walking out" (p. 2) or "she perfectly natural" (p. 7), I must say that I am inclined to agree with the pedagogical commentator. These constructions, whatever their abstract syntactical merits, are so conspicuously *unidiomatic* that they tend to attract attention to themselves and thus halt the imaginative progress of the reader. An author's object should be the art which conceals art, hence obtrusive singularity is always to be shunned. However, certain other academic comments seemed to me rather pedantic. On p. 49 I see you have the speech (by Ilsa) "She must come soon, *today yet*, or tomorrow." I suppose you realise that this is not idiomatic English; the "yet" being a dialect redundancy. Presumably the region is Germanic, with Ilsa's generation being the first to use English exclusively, hence the expression is no doubt typical. Dialect is to be used when it would naturally occur—but of course not otherwise. This story is certainly a most remarkable piece of work—full of the horror (also to be noted in early New England) of exaggerated instincts in remote and lonely places. I can't think of anything that could be done to better it as a whole. ...

Best wishes—HP



525. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Day after Candlemas  
(February 3, 1932)

Irradiant Incarnation of Infinite Illuminatism:—

..... As for puzzling—I doubt if I could ever become an enthusiast. I am mildly amused by an isolated charade or anagram now and then, when it comes up by accident, but am bored to tears by any continuous or premeditated session with this amiable form of futility. The reason for my indifference is doubtless closely allied to that behind my total indifference toward games and sports—namely, a lack of excess mental energy, which causes me to resent, unconsciously, the expenditure of any brain-power upon frankly uncorrelated and unprofitable ends. When I put out solid thought and concentration—a visibly exacting process for one never far from the point of nervous exhaustion—I absolutely demand a *tangible return for my pains*, in the form of some gratification of historical, scientific, or philosophical curiosity, or some aesthetick pleasure to be gain'd thro' the creation, perception, or crystallisation of some symmetrical imaginative picture or impression. Puzzles and games bring not even a faint suggestion of this sort of reward. They reveal no actual secrets of the universe, and help not at all in intensifying or preserving the tantalising moods and elusive dream-vistas of the aesthetick imagination. Aside from exercising the intellect in as dry and artificial a fashion as Cal Coolidge's mechanical horse exercises the body, they are a total loss—except of course for the superficial and childish amusement of seeing a bidden jack-in-the-box pop out, and for the still cheaper egotistical pleasure of beating somebody else and being able to say "what a smart boy I am!" Actually, the sole major pleasure of puzzles for superior persons is the *abstract and intrinsick exercise of the intellect involved*; the delight in the *mere process of tracking something down*, irrespective of the frivolity or futility of the object. Now I do not despise the attitude of those who seek this form of pleasure. On the contrary, I heartily envy anybody with enough excess brains to require such an artificial addition to the normal array of problems confronting the human mind. But I candidly admit I haven't the brains to need this

outlet. Just as I haven't such a plethora of physical energy as to make me enjoy walking *for the sake of the exercise*, (as you say you do, whereas I walk for the sake of the imaginative delights afforded by scenery, architecture, atmosphere, and historick associations) so do I lack that plethora of mental energy which would make me enjoy pursuing a series of cerebrational steps *for the sake of the pursuit*. I don't enjoy either exercising or thinking, but I can be driven to attempt either when enough of a reward is held out. Curiosity about the actual state of the cosmos is such a reward, but I can't summon up any corresponding curiosity about an artificial tangle which somebody has arbitrarily cooked up. I *am* avid to find out what arcane horror lies behind the sardonic colossi of Easter-Island, what process of nature has differentiated men, Negroes, and Neanderthals, and whether the cosmic rays represent the building-up or breaking-down of matter. These things are real and natural, and vast drama lies in their solution *because they are connected with obscure primal laws and not prearranged by any petty human smart aleck*. But I'll be goddamned if I can work up any avid curiosity over the question of what "my first" plus "my second" represents, or what common words can be anagrammatically derived from *secura* and *chesty*. What of it? Where's the kick? That is, where's the kick for him who cares not for processes but for ends? After I solve the problems—if I do—I don't know a cursed thing more about nature, history, and the universe than I did before. All my solution has not cleared up any of the myriad points about which I *really am* curious. And as I said before, I haven't any mental energy to spare on unamusing side-lines. It's just the same with games. Meaningless spotted pasteboards, carved castles and horses' heads, little balls flying in the air, big balls kicked and grappled by future bond salesmen and bankers, little balls knocked around with sticks in the hands of unimaginative manufacturers and senile plutocrats, horses goaded into foam while describing frantic circles that land them exactly where they started out ..... glory of sport ..... rah, rah, rah ..... No, Grandpa ain't made to relish sech didoes! All these things are, in their superior forms, simply by-products of excess intellectuality—which I haven't the honour to possess. In their inferior forms they are of course simply avenues of escape for persons with too poorly proportioned and correlated a perspective to distinguish betwixt the frivolous and the relevant—and my perspective (not thro' any native intellect of mine, but thro' sheer environmental accident) has not been

suffer'd to remain in that idyllick Arcadian state. Sports of a certain sort—football, prize-fighting, and the more virile kind generally—may perhaps have a symbolick value connected with the ceaseless struggle of races and nations for supremacy; but my poetick powers are insufficiently develop'd to make me take any keen delight in them. I might develop such a taste in time, but so far I have never seen a football game, bull fight, or sparring mill. In their day, I shou'd probably have liked gladiatorial sports with real killings. Habet! habet! Neca, Siphax, neca! Sanguinem bibe!

As for hobbies in general—my old head is too tired to take any new things on! My one aim is to get rid of some of the pressure already upon it. Hell, but the things that come up each day are beyond my power to cope with. They pile up and up—so that every unexhausted moment of my time is crowded to overflowing. I try to amputate dumbbell branches of my correspondence, but they are like the Hydra's heads. I cut out some reading, but other things crop up. It is literally a fight for breath—and I guess the only way out of it is to disappear and repudiate all obligations. . . . .

Θεοβάλδος

526. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Feby. 5, 1932

Dear Jehvish-Fi:—

..... Your recent reading is certainly solid & well chosen enough—I wish I had the time to keep up such a pace. I have not read *Ulysses*, because such extracts as I have seen convince me that it would hardly be worth the time & energy. Without doubt it forms an important landmark in the history of prose expression, but so far as I can see it is of theoretical significance rather than actual aesthetic value. It represents the intensive development—the concentration or exaggeration—of a literary principle which will greatly affect future writing, but which defeats its own ends of normally-proportioned portrayal when isolated & intensified to this extreme degree. The same is true of Joyce's later *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, extracts from which I have seen. And yet

there is no more powerful or penetrant writer living than Joyce when he is not pursuing his theory to these ultimate extremes. I don't underestimate Faulkner. *A Rose for Emily* is a great story, & all I said about it was that it is not *weird*. It belongs to a different genre, & brings a shudder of repulsion & physical horror rather than one of cosmic wonder. It is essentially a conte cruel of the Level type. If you are a Cather fan, don't miss *Shadows on the Rock*, which I read last month. It is full of the spirit of old Quebec, & makes me long to behold that ancient fortress town again. I read French's *Ghosts, Grim & Gentle*, & have twice seen the anthologist. He is an old man—must be high in the 70's—but very vigorous mentally. About M. R. James—I think I can see what you mean, but can't classify him quite as low as you do. And if you can't see his utter, prodigious, & literally incalculable superiority to the *W. T.* plodders I must again urge you to give your sense of appreciation a radical analysis & overhauling. James has a sense of dramatic values & an eye for hideous intrusions upon the commonplace that none of the pulp groundlings could even approach if they tried all their pitiful lives. But I'll concede he isn't really in the Machen, Blackwood, & Dunsany class. He is the earthiest member of the *big four*. Cram's *Dead Valley* is great stuff, & makes me wish desperately I could get hold of his other weird stuff. Whitehead knows Cram personally, & says that the latter himself has no copy of his own book of spectral phantasies, now rare & unobtainable.

..... As for a Japanese war—I can conceive of many conditions which would make such a thing highly necessary for the future safety of the Anglo-Saxon areas in & around the Pacific. We can't tell from present externals just what Japan's ultimate aims are, & of course under many conditions an early war would be a bad mistake; but none the less one ought not to take a dogmatic position in the matter. It would certainly be unsafe to allow a strong & potentially rival nation like Japan to gain full control of China, for in that case all the prodigious (though now unmanageable) resources of that vast & populous area would be a weapon in Japanese hands. Japan would be absolute mistress of the Pacific, & in a position to enforce her will high-handedly on Australia, New Zealand, California, & British Columbia, just as she is now enforcing it on China. That cannot be permitted, for the first requisite of a great civilisation is complete control of its own territories & inhabitants. Pacifistic talk is merely evasion & idealistic hot air—



although of course it is well for as many nations as possible (those able to share a certain amount of common natural interest & perspective) to form treaty agreements calculated to eliminate minor causes of dissension. The plain fact is, that when any group wants a certain thing with a certain degree of intensity, it will forget all about agreements & paper restrictions, & will go after it with all the physical force it can command. And it is plain that in many cases one group could manage to muster enough force to defeat all the united strength which any international action could bring against it. There will always be wars, & the victors in them will always be those with the greatest wealth, man-power, stamina, & intelligent preparation. When a hostile tiger jumps at you, the only thing to do is shoot at it—and it's just the same with a hostile nation. I endeavoured to enlist in the late war, but my health caused my rejection. I fancy I'd do the same in a future case—for although I fear I'd make a rotten soldier, I think it well for the members of a group to signify their willingness to uphold its interests. However—I doubt if the time is ripe yet for drastic action toward Japan. She may moderate her course until her strength is greater.

Yr obt grandsire  
HPL

527. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Saturday  
Feby. 12, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

Yes, I know the "she walking" type of construction is common in 18th century English, but that makes it none the less conspicuous today. As a born archaist, I myself grew up with Queen Anne and Georgian diction, and have had the very devil of a time escaping from it. I know you are fond of unusual turns of expression, but most of these seem to harmonise with your themes and thereby escape conspicuousness. This particular archaism, on the other hand, does not seem homogeneous with the rest of your style—hence caused both the teacher and myself to be momentarily halted by it. If your style were all 18th century, it would not be conspicuous; for only disparity makes it so. Thus you could very well write:

As we stopt at the Dolphin Inn, which stood over against the Town-Hall, I observ'd a thin antient Gentlewoman of the middle Size getting out of the Dunwich Post-Chaise. She walking up to the Door, a pert black Boy got out after her, burthen'd down with a great Number of Boxes and Parcels. . . .

Best wishes—  
HP

528. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

Feb. 18, 1932

Dear Mr. Wright:—

.....  
Sorry to say I haven't anything new which you would be likely to care for. Latterly my tastes have run to studies in geographical atmosphere requiring greater length than the popular editorial fancy relishes—my new *Shadow over Innsmouth* is three typed pages longer than *Whisperer in Darkness*, and conventional magazine standards would undoubtedly rate it "intolerably slow", "not conveniently divisible", or something of that sort. For the present I don't think I'll submit any new material anywhere, for the constant pressure of arbitrary requirements—plus the psychological effect of repeated rejections—leaves me absolutely tongue-tied so far as creation goes. I think I shall write with only my own tastes—and those of disinterested critics—in mind for a considerable period in the future; once more accumulating a stack of unpublished material as I did before 1923. Later, perhaps, there will be some opportunity for placing the accumulation. But of course—if by chance I turn out anything short and apparently conventional I may try my luck with it now and then; and if I do, I shall certainly send it to *Weird Tales* first of all.

Yrs. most sincerely—  
H. P. L.



529. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Viscous Vortex of Silhaa, beyond the Rim.  
Hour of the Shaping of the Nucleus,  
Feby. 18, 1932.

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

....

The best policy for my nerves, it seems to me, would be to forget all about editors—writing whatever I write solely for my own pleasure and allowing the results to accumulate as in the pre-1923 days. Some time the results may find a niche to fit in—but if not, it does not matter. Actually, that would seem to be about the only policy I *can* follow; for whenever I try to keep editorial restrictions and popular preferences in mind I find myself completely tongue (or pen) tied—unable to utter a thing! But of course, nervous states come and go with the years, and at some future period I may be able to work under conditions which are at present impossible for me.

Thine for the 49th Aklo Unveiling—  
E'ch-Pi-El.

530. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Feby. 26, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... The arts are stimulated in one way by economic prosperity, but they also profit by any kind of stability admitting leisurely reflection. It would undoubtedly be good for the general aesthetic standards of the country if the money-worshipping attitude of the 1920's were never regained. With crude acquisitiveness dethroned as a standard of quality & goal of achievement, there would be more of a chance for the restoration of older & sounder standards based on intel-

lectual & artistic values. .... Providence has lately had a very good series of poetry lectures & readings at Brown University—I attended two, hearing Prof. S. Foster Damon of this city & the more celebrated Stephen Vincent Benét. The latter made some very acute & pertinent comments.

As for the times—I don't see that they're getting any worse. They're merely not getting any better. It may be a good lesson for the "rugged individualists" to see the bankruptcy of their cherished pre-machine principles—for sooner or later they will have to begin building on a basis with greater chances for stability & permanence. Some would like to see a war with Japan because of the stimulus to munition & other industries & the disposal of surplus population—and also, because such a war will probably be necessary in any case sooner or later in order to ensure Anglo-Saxon security in the Pacific. But I rather doubt whether such will materialise just yet. Japan is doing to China only what all the other nations have been doing ever since the 1840's, & I fancy the Western powers will be content to hold off as long as there is no danger of Japan's getting full control of China. It would be the latter step—at once limiting Western trade in China & making Japan a dangerously powerful foe in the Pacific—which would cause Great Britain & the U. S. to consider a Japanese war. But before that time Japan may be heavily crippled by its virtually inevitable war with Soviet Russia. Japan got a late start, hence is doing its high-handed aggression today—whereas the other nations did theirs in the past & are now ready (having got what they want) to sit back loftily & preach 'high ideals' to younger & less established nations. ....

..... In my opinion the paramount things of existence are those mental & imaginative landmarks—language, culture, traditions, perspectives, instinctive responses to environmental stimuli, &c.—which give to mankind the illusion of significance & direction in the cosmic drift. Race & civilisation are more important, according to this point of view, than concrete political or economic status; so that the weakening of any racial culture by political division is to be regarded as an unqualified evil—justifiable only by the most extreme provocation. Greece suffered from lack of unity—Athens & Sparta, Syracuse & Thebes, &c. &c., being all separate city-states which acted together only under the most exceptional conditions. They managed to stand unitedly against Persia, but could not do it against Rome. Rome itself, on the other hand,

was always admirably united—hence stood firm against all comers till dissolved by internal decay. The English civilisation has so far stood up successfully on both sides, & with good luck can probably continue to do so; but whenever an external menace appears one wishes that a coördinated defence by Britain & America were firmly guaranteed instead of merely probable. In addition, the state of culture in America would have been greatly improved by continued solidarity with Great Britain. It is unlikely that the vulgar financial & quantitative ideals of the American majority today would have been quite so paramount had the region remained true to its rightful sovereign—nor would the spirit of lawlessness have been so general & deep-seated. Some foreigners would have entered, but probably not in such vast quantities; & the machinery of assimilation would have been better. The policy of inviting “oppressed” races is fatal to national welfare, since these elements are almost always biologically inferior & therefore unfit to uphold the institutions established by elements of greater stamina. When a race or group is oppressed, it is usually because of its own inherent inferiority—and we do not want a nation of inferior cringers on the soil settled by sturdy Englishmen. I think the “melting pot” delusion is about played out, & doubt if any immigrants of non-Nordic stock will ever be welcomed on a large scale again. To fancy that the posterity of Slavs, Jews, & Latins can approximate the instinctive emotional life of sturdy, fighting Teutono-Celtic peoples is to subscribe to a fatal fallacy. . . .

..... Meanwhile I myself remain in the position of those who reluctantly took the oath of abjuration in 1783. I am too attached to my native soil to leave it bodily, yet am unreconciled to the revolt that separated it from a Sovereign & national mainstream to which I cannot but feel a continued personal allegiance. I may yet move to Jamaica or Barbadoes or some other tropical colony in order to die under the old flag.

I don't think Cook will really get to the point of going to Arizona—and I find that his touch of malaria was not permanent. He is not, however, likely to do any more publishing. Incidentally—I have just learnt that the printed sheets of my *Shunned House* are not lost but transferred to storage in N. H. They will, however, be unlikely to see binding & issuance. . . .

New Georgian buildings are very common in New England—in fact, virtually all of the public edifices of Providence erected within the last

decade conform to this general type. It is obviously the one logical school of architecture for the Anglo-American colonies in relation to their history, & its sole formidable opponent is that raw “functionalism” which proclaims itself as the normal architecture of a new & rootless machine civilisation. . . . The skyscraper is not essentially novel; tall buildings having been common in mediaeval Italy, while Gothic towers approximate the same atmosphere. Modernism is manifested in certain proportionings based on the new structural materials (steel frame & concrete) employed for the practical purpose of the edifices concerned. A skyscraper (following Gothic lines or employing classical ornament) can be traditional, while a one-story building (abjuring traditional ornamentation & proportion) can be modernistic. Europe—especially Germany & Scandinavia—has more modernistic buildings than America, & the greatest advocate of modernistic building & city-planning is the Frenchman Le Corbusier. I don't especially like the Empire State Bldg.—but it's the design & not the height which alienates me. I like its tall & fantastic neighbour ten blocks north—the needle-pointed Chrysler. When buildings reach this level of height their minor differences in altitude are not striking to the eye near the ground—I can't say that either Chrysler or Empire State *looks* any taller to me than the old Woolworth. I intend to go up in the Empire State this year. Last summer I was too broke to spare the dollar admission to the tower.

As to cycles in civilisation—of course, a little knowledge is carried over each dark age between collapse & revival, but new fundamental moods & perspectives govern. Knowledge will not suffice to keep a culture alive beyond a certain stage of senility, because people begin to be weary of the tame security & comfort which they purchase at so high a price as measured in sacrifice of individualism. The repression, conformity, & complex technological application necessary to keep a highly evolved material civilisation running is so basically galling to the free human spirit that ennui & revolt are inevitable sooner or later. People begin to think that the game isn't worth the candle—they'd rather do without electric power & plumbing than bother with the restrictions & concentration needed to keep such things going, & had rather run the risk of being stabbed than uphold the standard of law & order which prevents them from stabbing those whom they want to stab. The game of refinement is played out for the time being, & the general impulse is to return to the primitive & begin over again, as a child knocks over a



tower of blocks & starts building another. The only kind of a culture which can last indefinitely is one of extreme liberality & non-material values—in which there is no complex interlocking fabric to keep up, & which does not need to exert much pressure on the individual. Such cultures are common in Asia—and the Chinese is probably the highest example. In spite of all conquerors there will be a virtually unchanged China for generations after the present European world is forgotten. Only ruthless external force in repeated waves can extirpate such a deep-seated & self-sufficient way of life—it took the successive alien influences of Persia, Greece, Rome, & Islam to wipe out the cyclopean Pharaonic civilisation of primal Egypt. If China survives unchanged—as the chances are 999 to 1 it will—it will be due to historic determinism & not to any fine-looking signatures on paper. The comic-opera League of Nations has always made me laugh, because no promise ever yet restrained any individual or group whose wish to do a certain thing exceeds certain limits. When anybody wants anything badly enough, he'll reach out for it in spite of all prior preachments—and conversely, those who are ostensibly pledged to restrain him will be mighty slow to back up their pledges with real force unless the reacher's plans happen to interfere with their own personal advantage. Leagues & all that are very pretty on paper—but they never mean anything when the crucial moment really comes. That's human nature—a fixed biological condition which no fine talk or high-flown aspiration can ever change. Good old Teddy Roosevelt recognised this—but we haven't any men of that calibre today. Still—it does no harm for the little idealists to play around in the sand with their tin pails & shovels. Probably it amuses them & keeps them out of mischief. And of course, there are a few sorts of treaties based on real mutual advantage which have a greater holding power than the majority, & which undoubtedly prevent enough minor clashes to make them worth negotiating. But in the long run the only guarantee of national security is a large, well-trained, & well-equipped army & navy.

As for cosmic matters—I think a little reflection will shew you that the absence of any beginning or ending is not only not difficult to grasp, but that *the opposite conception is absolutely impossible either to grasp or seriously believe*. If all entity had a beginning & will have an ending, then *what began it*, & *what began the beginner* at one end, & *what will non-entity be after its conclusions?* These assumptions of finiteness are

all puerile & arbitrary, & based on the mythology of the past. In the absence of any information beyond relatively narrow limits, the only reasonable adult assumption is that the space-time continuum represents a fixed & basic condition. It is all there is, has been, or will be anywhere. It is the primal essence of reality. It is fundamental entity, infinite & eternal, whose patterned rearrangements are an integral part of its properties, & of which the visible universe & human life are a negligible quasi-atom casually spawned for an instant & soon to be as though they had never been. But probably life as a basic principle is not peculiar to this part of space—though we might not recognise many of its other forms as being life at all.

If you have any stories you wish looked over I'd be glad to do it in the course of time. No—I don't think a tale is wasted if no one ever sees it. It is pleasant to have things praised, but the artist really creates merely for the pleasure of the process & for the satisfaction of preserving for himself a hitherto fleeting & unstable impression.

Best wishes—

Sincerely yours  
HPLovecraft

# 531. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

In the orange, carmine, & blue-litten zone at the  
end of the Angles . . . beyond the vague  
twilight abysses.

Hour of the sounding of the gong at the bot-  
tom of the unplumbed pit.

Feby. 26, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

The only basic trouble with premature burial tales is that they do not take into account the universal practise of embalming. The way to get around that, of course, would be to provide very particular reasons why embalming is dispensed with in the given case.

Yrs. in the nameless sodality of Nyarlathotep  
E'ch-Pi-El.

532. TO CARL JACOBI

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Feby. 27, 1932

Dear Mr. Jacobi:—

... *Mive* pleased me immensely, & I told Wright that I was glad to see at least one story whose weirdness of incident was made convincing by adequate emotional preparation & suitably developed atmosphere. Most of the stuff in the cheap weird magazines is utterly & irredeemably flat because of the lack of any substance to lend a semblance of actuality to the extravagant & over-crowded incidents. I also read *The Coach on the Ring*, & wish the editor had had the discernment to let the original title stand. Many things in this tale captivated me exceedingly, though as you realise it was a little nearer the popular magazine formula than *Mive*. I hope to see the other items of yours which you mention—& congratulate you sincerely on your success in making varied placements. Your versatility is decidedly greater than my own for I can never hit the popular formula well enough to land anywhere but in *Weird Tales*—or in the forthcoming & as yet standardless *Galaxy* to be issued by Swanson of Washburn, N. D. Moreover, I think my days of contribution to *W. T.* are decidedly numbered; for Wright rejected my best story last year, & is likely to do the same with my later work on account of its greater length & slower motion as compared with my earlier stuff. I can no longer be satisfied with the glib, machine-clipped type of tale which editors demand—& unfortunately there is no likelihood of editors ever being satisfied with the kind of story I now write. Repeated rejections began to get on my nerves so badly last autumn that I was almost unable to write anything at all—so now I have resolved to let professional magazines alone for a while & write to please myself only; letting the results pile up for whatever ultimate disposition the Fates may provide. Of course, though, I would probably try my professional luck with any especially short or obvious story which might happen to drop from my pen in the course of varied composition.

Derleth spoke very highly of your work & future promise, & admir-

ingly heralded *Mive* long before it appeared. He himself strikes me as one of the most remarkable youths I have ever encountered—gifted alike in serious & popular writing, & with an inexhaustible driving energy which most others must envy in vain. No doubt you have seen the MSS. of his serious work—*Evening in Spring*, *A Town Is Built*, &c. Possibly you also know my brilliant young friend Donald Wandrei, of your own Twin Cities.

The address of Robert E. Howard is Lock Box 313, Cross Plains, Texas. Just now he is travelling in the southern part of his state, hence may be tardier in receiving & replying to correspondence than at other times. He is an old-time Texan steeped in the virile & sanguinary lore of his native region, & writes of his local traditions with a force, sincerity, & genuinely poetic power which would surprise those who know only his more or less conventional contributions to the magazines. His letters form a veritable epic of primitive emotions & deeds in a grim & rugged setting—the last free play of the old Aryan tribal & combative instincts of which Homer & the Eddas & Sagas sing.

Hope you won't be disappointed with *In the Vault*, which is an old piece of mine once rejected by Wright but accepted on a second submission (instigated by Derleth) five years later. It is not very typical—at least in style—of what I am writing now.

With best wishes, congratulations on your work, & appreciation of the kind opinion you express concerning mine, I am,

Yours most cordially & sincerely,

H.P. Lovecraft

533. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Leaden hillside of Pnapf on the green-litten  
planet Hchab in Dimension N

Hour of the voice & vapour from the bot-  
tomless cleft.

March 2, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I have a sort of time idea of very simple nature floating around in the back of my head, but don't know when I shall ever get around to using



it. The notion is that of a race in primal Lomar perhaps even before the founding of Olathœ & in the heyday of Hyperborean Commorion—who gained a knowledge of all arts & sciences by sending thought-streams ahead to drain the minds of men in future ages—angling in time, as it were. Now & then they get hold of a really competent man of learning, & annex all his thoughts. Usually they only keep their victims tranced for a short time, but once in a while, when they need some special piece of continuous information, one of their number sacrifices himself for the race & actually changes bodies with the first thoroughly satisfactory victim he finds. The victim's brain then goes back to 100,000 B. C.—into the hypnotist's body to live in Lomar for the rest of his life, while the hypnotist from dead aeons animates the modern clay of his victim. Complications can be imagined. I have no idea how—or from what angle—I shall elaborate the thing.

Yrs for ultimate abysses  
E'ch-Pi-El

534. TO AUGUST DERLETH

March 4, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

... Glad the literary work still goes on, and that the cheques still come in. As for my own latter-day attitude toward writing and submitting—I can see why you consider my anti-rejection policy a stubbornly foolish and needlessly short-sighted one, and am not prepared to offer any defense other than the mere fact that repeated rejections *do* work in a certain way on my psychology—rationally or not—and that their effect is to cause in me a certain literary lockjaw which absolutely prevents further fictional composition despite my most arduous efforts. I would be the last to say that they *ought* to produce such an effect, or that they would—even in a slight degree—upon a psychology of 100% toughness and balance. But unfortunately my nervous equilibrium has always been a rather uncertain quantity, and it is now in one of its more ragged phases—though I hardly fancy it portends one of the actual near-breakdowns as of 1898, 1900, 1906, 1908, 1912, and 1919. There

are times when the experience of repeated rejections would mean little to me, but other times when the symbolism of the process grated harshly—and now is one of those other times. ....

Yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servt.,  
HP

535. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

March 5, 1932

Jonckheer:—

... When I asked, on Swanson's behalf, about my reprinting rights, (certain tales of mine—prior to 1926—were sold without the later reservations) Wright replied that it was nix on the ones he owned, and that—since Swanson was likely to prove a rival of his—he did not favour the second sale of those tales in which I hold later rights. In other words, this bozo who has exploited his authors for his own profit—cabbaging all their rights until they learned to reserve them, rejecting their best tales, reprinting others without added remuneration, and backing out of book-publishing promises while he pushes the work of his pal Kline—this hard egg who actually boasted to a friend of Belknap's that he has his authors at his mercy financially because for the most part there's nowhere else they can place their work—expects his lamb-like contributors to forfeit their legitimate rights as a personal favour to him in exchange for all his unnumbered kindnesses! Gents, I like that! Well—what I did was to give him the civilised Rhodinsular equivalent of that curt injunction so popular in his own tempest-swept cosmopolis—"go jump in the lake"! I'm god-damn'd if I'll be blackmailed, through any implied withdrawal of favour, into passing up legitimate chances for publication! ... I myself stand pat—as indeed honour would impel me to do in any case, since I had told Swanson he could have his pick of any reprints of which I owned residual rights. I certainly don't intend to be harassed any further by damn'd hagglers—and I have virtually abandoned the idea of attempting professional fiction contributions. The repeated rebuffs I receive from capricious asses like Wright, Babbittesque dolts like that drivelling Clayton, and conventional namby-pambys like Shiras of Putnam's have about paralysed me



into a helpless and disgusted inarticulateness; so that I resolved some time ago to chuck the whole loathsome mess and return to the purely non-professional basis of pre-1923 days, when I wrote spontaneously and without the expectation of marketing. . . I told Wright as much in my letter—but added that of course I'd give him a first look at any extra short or conventional specimen I might happen to evolve. That isn't "bad business"—because I had reached the point where, except after a stimulating repudiation of degrading commercialism, I was absolutely unable to write any fiction at all, despite the most serious efforts. It was a case of either repudiating cheap standards and restrictions, or of remaining wholly tongue (or pen) tied fictionally. Most unfortunately, I haven't the cleverness to concoct ingenious conventionalities according to the commercial specifications of unimaginative editors. I have either to write the stories that are in me, or else keep quiet. And I'll be shot if I'll let any pox-rotted sensation-pander gag me! Since spewing out my allegiance to current markets I have written two new tales—*The Shadow over Innsmouth*, which comes to 72 pages, (2 pp. longer than the *Whisperer*) and *The Dreams in the Witch-House*, which reached 34 pages of pencil script. Having abandoned all hope of getting a fountain pen to suit my aging claw and crabbed cography, I have returned to the pencils of my infancy. Just bought a mechanical pencil (first I've owned since 1904) at Woolworth's for a dime to obviate interruptive sharpenings.

I have no hope that Swanson's *Galaxy* will prosper, for Klarkash-Ton gives the most pessimistic forecasts. It was merely for the principle of the thing that I told Wright where he got off. As for its possible rivalry—I added to F. W. that if it did nose out its older contemporaries it would be less on account of reprints than on account of the lesser conventionality of contents—for new, struggling magazines with starvation rates always carry, besides some very poor tales, certain really unique and original items which the vested interests reject. I furthermore added that the logical way for an editor to avoid any rivalry over reprints was to buy up second rights and run them himself—to be in demand and form a source of competition. Probably this proved a bit unpalatable to Brother Farny—who has shewn such a predilection for reprinting my stuff without additional payments—but he must learn that his arrogant czardom cannot be expected to last indefinitely under shifting conditions. Once he did indeed have the upper hand, as he boasted to

Belknap's acquaintance; . . . but he must learn to take his medicine when time turns the tables! Well—I'm out of it. The fellow can do what he goddam pleases—both as to acceptance of my recent MSS. and as to future publication (if Swanson doesn't issue them first in a paper-bound book as vaguely proposed) of the book of tales promised in 1927. The stuff is his to take or leave, and if he decides to leave it he won't hear any complaints from the old gentleman. I know the kind of hard-headed haggling in which it's of no use for me to mix! But meanwhile pray thank Quinn most warmly and sincerely for the interest and consideration he has exhibited in my behalf. A regular guy, I'll say . . . and I must express my gratitude before dutifully forgetting the entire incident!

Well—be good—  
Grandpa O'Casey

536. TO JAMES F. MORTON

March 7, 1932

Peak-Passing Pinnacle of Pendulum-Prompted Pan-Potentiality:—

By the way—last Saturn's Day Brobst and I went to Bristol by stage-coach, did up all the colonial sights, and stopt at Warren on our way back. After digesting Warren's quiet lanes and doorways we went across the tracks to Aunt Julia's, where we tanked up on twelve different kinds of ice cream—all they're serving at this time of year. The antient gentleman, of course, was not there—since (as I wish to gawd I could) she spends all her winters in Florida—but the bimbo in charge was very pleasant, and we got quick service since we were the only customers. Toward the end of the meal the presiding host—overhearing our conversation as it turned upon the famous Wandrei-Plantagenet-Theobald cleanup of MDCCCXXVII—horned in upon us to tell how well he recalled the celebrated feat of five years ago. It seems that we were remembered better than we realised, and that Aunt Julia shew'd our triangularly signed statement year after year to patrons from all over the country—until, alas, she lost it some time last summer. I told the guy that at least two-thirds of the old-time trio had paid him annual

visits ever since and would continue to do so; and he replied that he hoped we'd make ourselves known to him the next time we came, since (like me) he very easily forgets faces. I told him, we surely would—if I remembered his face . . . which I probably shan't, since it's very undistinctive tho' genial. I wonder if he's a grandson of Aunt Julia or just a hired man?

..... Anticipation is a false lure—because for a keen imagination it is always disappointed.

Well—see ya later!

Πάππος Θεοβάλδος

537. TO J. VERNON SHEA

March 22, 1932

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

..... As for the question of war—I'm sorry my attitude disappoints you, but I really don't see any other rational attitude to hold. I'm not denying the extreme ill effects of modern warfare, or even that a future world war may mean the end of civilisation; but in spite of all that I can't blind myself to the plain & simple fact that war is no more avoidable than earthquakes or cyclones. We don't want these latter—but we build earthquake-proof houses & cyclone-cellars in the affected districts just the same. And as we prepare defences against these natural inroads, just so must we prepare defences against the natural inroads of embattled enemies. War is no formal institution which legislation can abolish. It is simply the inevitable result of basic human instincts under certain recurrent & unavoidable conditions. Whenever a group has an united wish for a certain thing, it will always reach out for that thing with its maximum physical strength—and will get it unless there is some superior physical force to stop it. Sometimes one group can manage to muster up—secretly or otherwise—enough strength to whip any possible combination which can be brought against it; & if each other group be not adequately prepared all the time, this "sometimes" will be damned often. No diversity of groups can ever be depended upon to act permanently & dependably together—and despite all the current pretence & hokum there is no indication of any *real* trend in this direction. Radically different interests & heritages make such a col-

lective policy virtually impossible for all time—and he who banks on such a thing gets woefully left. Each nation is out for what it wants in any way it can get it—and the notion that any one nation can be sure of the forbearance of any other (& especially any very dissimilar) nation is sheer puerility. Look at Japan, Manchuria, & the impotent comic-opera league today! If Japan ever wants California, what but good powder & cold steel is going to prevent her from getting it? The only guarantee of any people that their descendants will live in safety under the same institutions & with the same language is in being adequately armed for defence & willing to fight like men when an emergency comes. The price of not being men is being a race of cringing dispossessed skulkers like the Jews, or sly, crafty, insinuating underlings like the Hellenistic Greeks in Roman times. No Nordic could consider such a fate even for a moment. I'll agree, though, on one thing—that under present conditions it is a little too much to fight for mere foreign trade privileges. Defence of one's own land & race is the proper object of armament.

Yr obt grandsire  
Ech-Pi-El

538. TO MAURICE W. MOE

March 26, 1932

O Sage:—

..... Many an aesthetick dreamer is not a *true* introvert, but rather (as Aldous Huxley points out in *Proper Studies*) a *sensationalist-extravert* who derives his emotional satisfactions from the visible world viewed purely as an impersonal decorative spectacle, instead of from an inner world of his own subjective synthesising. Wilde, Flaubert, Gautier, and many others were sensationalist-extraverts. I am inclined to think I am. .... I have some qualities of introversion, and might possibly show up as an intro on Doc Norris's smugly graded system; but am really a sort of fifty-fifty proposition with a hell of a lot of extraversion. You'll notice that although my yarns reach out into the nameless abyss, they always take off from the springboard of a realistic setting. Poe has his haunted regions nameless, and peopled by



mysterious beings with unknown pasts—but I make mine minutely typical of old New England, and give my characters (by implication and sometimes in detail) characteristic New England genealogies. I don't weave dreams absolutely out of nothing, (i.e., out of material wholly in the subconscious) but need the spur of some actual scene or object or incident to set me off. Like Gautier (tho' on a microscopically reduced scale) I am "one for whom the visible world exists". In short, I probably form—roughly speaking—what young Huxley calls a *sensationalist-extravert*. The visible world is my circus and prompt-book, but I don't take it very seriously and don't give much of a damn what becomes of it. To me the most important thing—and the most primarily interesting thing—is opportunity to think and dream and express myself as I please. Worldly activity like yours and Morton's would be to me a poignant and unendurable hell—something which no compulsion, not even the threat of starving, could induce me to undertake. But on the other hand I am more extraverted than Loveman and Sonny Belknap; since they are aesthetically self-sufficient without travel, whereas I crave a diversity of objective scenic and architectural impressions. Amidst all these subtle gradations, he would be an ass indeed who tried to group all mankind into two compartments—extraverts and introverts. . .

. . While it is damn true that of two statements the more *direct*, *caeteris paribus*, is the better, it does not follow that a skeletal structure is the prose ideal. There are limits—and euphony must be sacrificed for headline brevity. The sort of superfluous stuff that needs clearing away is what dilutes the thought by removing the closely-knit relationship of cognate parts. It isn't wholly a matter of the number of words; and often a smooth, ample passage is actually more *direct* than a chopped-up, rugged hash of conscious Carlylese which shows less words by mathematical count. Then again, actual phonetic harmony means a lot in itself. Good prose needs *rhythm* as much as good verse, and anybody who thinks that the style of *Time* is real prose is a sucker. Of course, one oughtn't to strike a cloying sing-song like Thrift's pale-Hubbardesque iambicks in the *Lucky Dog*, or like some of my own "and"-balanc'd periods of yesteryear; but just the same, there's no excuse for barking out an Hemingway machine-gun fire when one could weave prose which can be read aloud without sore throat or hiccoughs. I refuse to be taken in by the goddam bunk of this era just as totally as I refused to fall for the pompous, polite bull of Victorianism—and one of

the chief fallacies of the present is that smoothness, even when involving no sacrifice of directness, is a defect. The best prose is vigorous, direct, unadorn'd, and closely related (as is the best verse) to the language of actual discourse; but it has its natural rhythms and smoothness just as good oral speech has. There has never been any prose as good as that of the early eighteenth century, and anyone who thinks he can improve upon Swift, Steele, and Addison is a blockhead. On the other hand, the affectations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are very bad; good prose not appearing again until the eighties or nineties. I had hopes that the improv'd prose of my youth wou'd prove permanent, but I find to my sorrow that it is sinking into a slough of abbreviated affectation. However, *verse* is spectacularly and paradoxically *improving*: so that I do not know any age since that of Elizabeth in which poets have enjoy'd a better medium of expression. One can but wish that a race of major bards surviv'd to take advantage of the post-Victorian rise in taste and fastidiousness. . . . .

. . It's quite possible to get a very fair objective slant on literary values through scholarship and taste alone—enough, certainly, to help one pick out real stuff from hokem—but at the same time, it isn't likely that anybody can get full value out of any artistick manifestation unless he's been through actual first-hand experiences (at least to some extent) paralleling those of the artist. I recognise that my own subjective indifference to realistik literature (an indifference, however, which in no way dulls my intense objective appreciation of the realistik masters) depends very largely on the circumstance that I have had a comparatively small range of worldly contacts and experiences. . . . . Young Augie Derleth of Sauk City pries into the texture of real life until his fellow-townfolk look upon him as almost a tasteless and impertinent nuisance! Gad, but the way that child is getting along! He has things habitually in *The Midland* and kindred sheets, and is perfecting a Proustian insight and poignancy which at times leaves me quite breathless. . . . I myself clearly recognise the limits beyond which I cannot successfully go, and have no thought of doing anything serious except in the domain of phantasy. (And that's not saying I'll do anything really important in that domain either!) . .

Etaoin shrdlu!

—Grandpa Lo.

539. TO AUGUST DERLETH

March 31, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

.. As for a book of my stuff—I don't think it's worth bothering very energetically about. What depressed me in the Putnam incident was not the nonappearance of the volume but the logical analysis which convinced me of the permanent inferiority of my efforts. I now think I erred (as I believe you said at the time) in sending any of the cruder specimens. Some day I may try to remove a few of the obvious crudities from things like *Dagon*—but then again I may not. As to grouping certain tales of cosmic forces in a class apart—again I fear that they fall between two stools. Whereas editors think them too uniform when separately considered, they would condemn them as too heterogeneous and perhaps even subtly contradictory if they were expressly offered as a unit. Actually, I don't think the time is yet ripe for a book of my stuff. I haven't written enough really good material to form a full-sized volume, and may never do so. ....

Best wishes—  
Grandpa

540. TO J. VERNON SHEA

March 31

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

..... As for the matter of war—I don't see that there's any way to look at it except on a hard fact basis. Nor do I see why the question of fighting can be left to the individual caprice of a flighty & heterogeneous population when the safety of a whole civilisation is at stake. If whim, softness, propaganda, & idealistic theory be permitted to govern every person's decision regarding the defence of his country at a time of peril, there can never be any certainty of effective action in a crisis where promptness & unity mean survival itself. The

Minoan civilisation of Crete was wiped out & forgotten because the people would not stand together against the invading Dorians & Achaeans. When a nation is caught in an emergency, there is no time for argument & theory. If something isn't done right away, the enemy will be able to put something disastrous across. We can't wait for every scatterbrained theorist to make up his mind as to exactly what he wants to do. It is the nation which has given its citizens the safety that enabled them to enjoy life at all. Whatever they have, they owe to it. And when the nation is in peril they owe it all the support they can give. I don't say that conscription is necessary in every war. Sometimes a regular army is enough for security. But I do say (with proper shame at my own military ignorance & probable incompetence) that universal *training* ought to prevail, as indeed it did in early New England. Look at the messy & appalling unpreparedness of the U. S. when it entered the World War! Suppose that emergency had been a sudden Japanese-Mexican invasion (as we may have some day) instead of a distant conflict with allies already holding the enemy at bay? I leave the situation to your imagination. You'll undoubtedly outgrow your present attitude, for it is really inconsistent with realistic reason. As for the matter of the Nordic race & culture—there is no question but that, allowing for all blood mixture, the North-European represents a distinctive heritage with self-respecting characteristics all its own. ....

Yr obt Servt  
Ech-Pi-El

541. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Woden's Daeg,  
April, 1932.

Crowning Cog of Coördinated Chronometry:—

.....

.. The cardinal virtue of Asia is its sane and philosophick timelessness. Whenever I contemplate that side of the Oriental nature, with its easy handling of centuries and millennia and its patrician disregard of momentary stirs and bustlings, I am tempted to weep at the futile tail-chasing and clock-groveling of the hectick West; and to wish that the virile Nordick had never left his homeland in the Hindoo-Koosh to



merge his fortunes with the restless, fever'd, machine-driven European chasers after mutable nothingness. Had we stuck to Asia, we might have founded a permanent world-empire of unrivalled splendour and irresistible strength—as mighty and puissant as Rome, and as stable and enduring as antique Ægyptus or deathless Sinae. We might have kill'd off all the slant-eyed yellow folk, and have had long camel-trains of slaves and gold and ivory and strange crystals sent us as tribute by the dark-eyed vassals and cringers of Ind, of Persia, of Africk, of Europa, and of the empires of Cuzco and Uxmal beyond the monstrous River Ocean. Glory to the Æsir! A bullock to golden-bearded Odin, and a fat buck Negro to hammer-wielding Thor! Long life to Astahahn, our capital on the Yann—for here we have fetter'd and manacled Time, who wou'd otherwise slay the gods. Eheu—the things that might have been!

Yr. most obt.,  
Theobaldus

542. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Woden's-Daeg,  
April, 1932.

Satient Skyscraper of Saxiscient Sagacity:—

.....  
I'll pass the good word to young Brobst. They're cramming and working him to beat hell just now, so that he hasn't been over here as frequently as in Feby. and March. His worst grind lets up early in June, when his four-months period of probation expires. If a guy can live through that ordeal, he's A-1 material and will probably make good on the rest—though that year at Bellevue would be maddening to anybody who didn't have case-harden'd nerves. It's fortunate some eggs take to that kind of thing. Cripes! I'd faint and go to pieces at some of the sights and duties that Brobst takes as a matter of course, and almost enjoys as a foil to placid ennui. Gord knows I'm no friend of ennui, but I want my kick to come from something other than the gruesomeness of physical and psychological abnormality, pathology, and decay!

Yr. obt.,  
Theobaldus

543. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Yoth-Tlaggon—at the Crimson Spring  
Hour of the Amorphous Reflection  
April 4, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I'm now helping Whitehead prepare a new ending and background for a story Bates has rejected. The original told of a young man who bumped his head and thereafter heard sounds as of a mighty cataclysm, although the city around him was quiescent. It was supposed to be due to a result of the bruise—which made the fellow's head a natural radio and enabled him to hear the Japanese earthquake—which was occurring at the time. Bates rightly thought this tame, so I am having the cataclysm and its causes somewhat different. I am having the bruise excite cells of hereditary memory causing the man to hear the destruction and sinking of fabulous Mu 20,000 years ago!

Yrs. for the nether sign—  
Ech-Pi-El

544. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
April 20, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... My aunt, though not going outdoors, has had no relapses of acute trouble during the winter. Cook seems to be in relatively excellent health. Long is busy with revision & popular magazine tales, so has had but little time for poetic pursuits of late. Sechrist—the bee expert—is now stationed in Davis, California. I've written a couple of tales since November, but am not attempting much marketing. The Vanguard Press asked to see some of my stuff & I sent them 4 tales, but have no idea that they'll do anything about them. This is no time for book publishing—nor am I at all anxious to have a book published.

The present spring certainly has been provokingly backward so far. Hope next month will show an improvement & make outings possible. I am now starting for Boston to spend a week with Cook.

Best wishes—HPLovecraft

545. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Night of the Awful Sabbat  
April 30, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

..... I wish there could be a single writer with the sheer genius of Poe, the imaginative scope of Blackwood, and the magical prose of Dunsany!

Best wishes—  
HP

546. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

May 4, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

.....  
As for your fear of a too large number of sonnets reflecting the march of the years—I think it is wholly groundless. This theme is possibly the most significant one in all life & literature, & there is hardly any such thing as overdoing it. One needn't worry too much about subject-matter so long as such matter lies within the domain of the genuine (as distinguished from the artificial, the sentimental, & the affected) & is treated with intensity & sincerity. .... And don't regret *simplicity*. Simplicity is the highest attribute of classical art—all one needs to avoid is triteness, commonplaceness, & false or artificial sentiment. ....

Yrs sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

547. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Providence, R. I.  
May 7, 1932

Dear R E H:—

.....  
What you say of your dreams of cold, grey skies—and of the actual skies and sunsets in your part of the world—interests me vastly. I am myself extremely susceptible to sky effects, particularly gorgeous and apocalyptic sunsets. Sunsets arouse in me vague feelings of pseudo-memory, mystical revelation, and adventurous expectancy, which nothing else can even begin to conjure up. They always seem to me to be about to unveil supernal vistas of other (yet half-familiar) worlds and other dimensions. I am also ineffably fascinated by the golden light of late afternoon which somewhat precedes the sunset. Any sort of scene bathed in this unearthly splendour—with tinges of crimson and long, fantastic shadows—seems to my fancy part of a strange, ethereal realm of wonder and beauty but faintly allied to anything in the domain of prosaic reality. I think the tropics fascinate me more than the north—although, paradoxically, no spot on earth holds my terrified imagination more potently and breathlessly than the aeon-dead, unknown reaches of the great white antarctic.

As possibly you have learned directly by this time, Swanson's plans for any kind of publication are now definitely abandoned. He plans to return my two stories shortly. I am sorry to see my market disappear, even though this one never promised to be very important. Another blow to the weird writer is the retrenchment policy just adopted by Clayton, whereby *S. T.* becomes a quarterly whilst *Astounding* becomes a bi-monthly. These are certainly lean days for the publishing business, as for other businesses! As for writing the *Necronomicon*—I wish I had the energy and ingenuity to do it! I fear it would be quite a job in view of the very diverse passages and intimations which I have in the course of time attributed to it! I might, though, issue an *abridged Necronomicon*—containing such parts as are considered at least reasonably safe for



the perusal of mankind! When von Juntz's Black Book and the poems of Justin Geoffrey are on the market, I shall certainly have to think about the immortalisation of old Abdul! . . .

Yrs. most sincerely—  
H P L

548. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
May 11, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Still in doubt as to how much of a trip I can make—but have one faint hope of getting to New Orleans, which I have always wanted to see. Certainly, I hope I can get out of the chilliness of this northern spring—whose backwardness is savagely compensating for the mild winter. . . .

Yrs most sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

549. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Hotel Orleans  
726 St. Charles St.  
New Orleans, La.  
June 6, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

Well—the trip has been a brilliant success so far. I caught a morning coach for Knoxville, Tenn., going through the exquisite Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, and had a veritable aesthetic orgy watching the Blue Ridge Mountains. The next day I rode across Tennessee to Chattanooga—whose hilly setting is one of the most magnificent sights I ever hope to see in my lifetime. I went up Lookout Mountain

and revelled in the view and afterward descended into the spectral caverns inside the mountain—where in a vast vaulted chamber a 145-foot waterfall thunders endlessly in eternal night. This chamber and waterfall were discovered only two years ago—at the end of sealed galleries whose geological formations prove them never to have been entered by mankind before. After a couple of days in Chattanooga I rode across southern Tennessee to Memphis, where I saw the mighty Mississippi for the first time in my life. This ride involved some of the most magnificent sights of the whole trip—for most of it lay in or beside what is whimsically called the "Grand Canyon of the Tennessee River"—the magnificent bluffs forming part of the Cumberland Mountain system. . . The next day I pushed down into the delta cotton country of Mississippi. . . In the evening—amidst golden sunset light—I pushed on to ancient Natchez, incidentally reaching the belt of far-southern vegetation, with live-oaks and Spanish moss.

Natchez deserves a whole chapter to itself—for it is one of the most exquisitely fascinating places I have ever seen. In the first place, the subtropical landscape is a thing of poignant and breathless beauty—much finer than that of Louisiana, and recalling the descriptions of Chateaubriand in *Atala*. This last is no chance coincidence—for Chateaubriand visited in Natchez once and remembered what he saw. The country is rolling, with many picturesque ravines, and drops to the Mississippi in a perpendicular 200-foot bluff. Vegetation is lush and abundant, and the moss on the great-live-oaks and cypresses creates an unforgettable picture. Most of the roads are deeply sunken below the general surface of the terrain they traverse, owing to the peculiar nature of the yellow clay. The steep walls on either side—over-arched with stately trees which spread a green twilight all around—give one a sense of fantastic unreality which is hard to overcome. . . . In Natchez one may find all sorts of early architecture—primitive Spanish designs, Louisiana types, Georgian approximations, and the omnipresent classic-revival specimens. The people are very courteous and urbane, and my hotel-keeper solicitously introduced me to all the leading sources of antiquarian information. In the two days I spent there I saw most of what there is to be seen and formed a lasting admiration for the place. It takes rank with Charleston, Quebec, Salem, Marblehead, and Newburyport as one of my favourite early-American backwaters, and I certainly mean to re-visit it some time. . . .

..... On the way to New Orleans I noted many old plantation-houses in various stages of desertion and decay—plus two, Ormond and d'Estreban, which have been gratifyingly restored. There are two distinct types of plantation house—the earlier Creole sort with raised basement, low portico, steep slant roof, and small dormers, and the later American type with vast columns and general classic-revival architecture. Both of these types coexist as far north as Natchez.

At last I came to the city itself—and here I still am! It is, of course, a modern metropolis of nearly 500,000—hence is generally not so congenial to me as Natchez—but tucked in at a bend of the river is the unchanged parallelogram of the ancient 18th century section—the "Vieux Carré"—which more than atones for all the circumambient modernity. It is impossible to overestimate the intense and compelling charm of the Vieux Carré—block on block of unbroken antiquity as expressed in old brick-and-stucco Franco-Hispanic houses with wrought-iron balconies and marvellous interior courts or patios. The town was wholly burnt down in 1788, and at once rebuilt during a period of intense prosperity and Spanish domination—hence the solid and mainly Hispanic character of the houses which survive to this day. The architecture of old New Orleans is almost unique, but its chief affinities on this continent are the styles of Charleston and Quebec. These three towns stand out as the most thoroughly ancient and exotic urban centres of North America. I am seeing the place thoroughly and gradually and am also taking in as many neighbouring plantation-houses as possible. I've found an ideally quiet hotel—the Orleans—where an inside room and bath can be had for a dollar a day—and here I'm parked for at least a week or more. The climate of New Orleans suits me ideally. It is, I believe, even farther south than St. Augustine; and is definitely more subtropical than my beloved Charleston. Tall Washington Palms and thick, luxuriant Brazilian date palms are omnipresent; while the live-oaks, cypresses, magnolias, oleanders, Spanish moss, and luxuriant vines all unite to form a picture of tropic opulence. From the standpoint of choice greenery, Louisiana easily beats Florida. The newer American parts of New Orleans lie south of broad Canal St., and include some magnificent shady streets. The parts peopled by Creole descendants lie mostly toward the north. I have seen no French signs, and imagine that the young public-schooled generation doesn't speak much French; but the newer houses of the Creoles retain certain characteristics of older

Creole architecture which make them unmistakable. Much fusion of American and Creole has taken place, yet beyond the amalgamated area many traces of the two separate elements can be discerned. I am noting as many as possible of the little local customs—some of which are apparently peculiar to the place. The fantastic above-ground cemeteries are fascinating in the extreme. In former times the newer part of the town was a network of open drainage canals running down the centre of broad streets. These canals are now roofed over and bear street-car tracks—giving rise to a broad boulevard system. One or two, though, are still open—so that I saw a sample of the way the whole city used to be. I took a long tour of the modern section in a sightseeing bus—and have also walked through parts of it in quest of overtaken and imbedded plantation houses. But naturally, most of my time is spent in the squares and patios of the Vieux Carré. ...

Yr. most oblig'd obdt. Servt.—  
HP

550. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Hotel Orleans,  
New Orleans, La.  
June 8, 1932.

Dear R E H:—

.....  
The career of that Pennsylvania Irishman in the oil country certainly teems with both drama and pathos. The paregoric-fiend, also, must have been an interesting specimen. I agree with you that most cases of human disintegration are the result of gradual chance incidents—little things acting on a more or less weak hereditary fibre—rather than the product of sudden and over-whelming disasters. As for the chances of mishap, as very graphically outlined in one of your paragraphs, I am inclined to think that you overstress the picturesque force of adverse fate just a trifle. Actually, Nature is supremely impersonal. The cosmos is neither for nor against the tiny and momentary accident called organic life, and the still tinier and more momentary phase of that accident called man-



kind. What happens to man is simply the result of chance—his environment is perfectly neutral, and aims neither to harm nor to help him. The environment does not take man and his needs into consideration at all—it is wholly man's own outlook how well he can fit himself to the general, unchangeable environment, and how much he can change the immediate details of the environment to suit his needs more closely. Turning to your illustration—for every man who stubs his toe on the single rock in a 10-acre tract at night, there are a dozen other men who cross the same tract under similar conditions without stubbing their toes at all. There are hundreds of weak spots in the ice of frozen rivers where no one happens to be injured—and the man who falls in at last may have narrowly escaped a dozen times before. With a choice of 17 roads and only one wrong, the vast majority of travellers *will indeed* get a right road. When, according to the laws of chance, some poor devil actually *does* take the one wrong road out of 17, he naturally remembers and emphasises the fact—for it is always the *exceptional* which sticks in our consciousness. The incident of the signboard which you cite would seem externally to argue some malignant ruling power—but as a matter of fact these occasional coincidences can hardly count as evidence. That sign would have fallen just the same even if no natty stranger had been walking under it. There are thousands of times when objects fall with no one under them, and thousands of times when they don't fall with people under them. Once in a while a rare combination of falling and person beneath will occur—but no general law is deducible from this. Such cases are extremely exceptional, their very rarity being an indication of their lack of significance.

.....

Your observations on the unreliability of the human senses confirm a principle long pointed out by historians and folklorists. As a matter of fact, it is only with great difficulty and through a large amount of comparison and coördination that we are able to get any sort of a dependable picture of the external world which stretches around us. The moment we rely on one-man evidence—however bona fide—we are lost. The best illustration of this sort of thing is the vast body of perfectly honest testimony in behalf of occult phenomena collected by serious students like Chevreuil and Flammarion. On its face, this testimony regarding haunted houses, premonitions of death, supernatural visitations, etc. etc. would be more than enough to establish the occult as a truth

of science—yet we know that it does nothing of the kind among conservative scholars. As a matter of fact, each soberly related incident involves some basic error of perception, or some inventive magnification in the course of narration and repetition—so that any one of them ultimately boils down either to a misrepresentation or misinterpretation of something which did occur, or to an unconscious exploitation of a folklore pattern involving the serious assertion of something which never occurred. But there are many who cannot and will not take this unreliability of the senses into account. . . .

.....

... Current work and reading all go into a black leatherette bag, and accompany me to whatever neighbouring woodland retreat I choose. Likewise when I am away—I always choose some picturesque park or other outdoor spot to do my reading and writing in. Here in New Orleans, as I mentioned before, my headquarters is ancient Jackson Square—where I am at the present moment. But as for health—I'm only just on my feet again myself. I was slowly recovering from my April cold when I hit New York, but there the unheated condition of Long's apartment house gave me a hell of a relapse. I used 33 handkerchiefs in the course of only a few days, and could not smell or taste a thing from May 23 until 3 days ago! All my southward trip—enjoyable as it was—was made under the most distressing nasal and bronchial conditions, with a steady headache accompaniment! But the warmth of New Orleans is baking the venom out of me, and I feel better each day.

.....

Yrs. most sincerely,  
H P L

551. TO AUGUST DERLETH

New Orleans—  
June 12, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

Yes,—Grandpa is still hanging around New Orleans, for it's a hard city to break away from. . . . I spend all my time in the Vieux Carré,

and am constantly uncovering new street vistas, perspectives of massed chimneys, gables, and balconies, and garden-garnished inner courtyards, which add to the original fascination of the place. One might make a sort of game by trying to pile up a high score of different courtyards entered. Some are manifestly open to the public and advertised as such; others have to be discovered independently, yet belong to shops and are freely open when found; still others belong to apartment or rooming houses, with their accessibility a doubtful question; whilst a few appertain to the slender stock of remaining private mansions, and are emphatically and definitely closed . . . unless one happens to get a glimpse through the entrance arcade when the gate is momentarily opened for visitors or tradesmen. Almost every patio differs from almost every other one in size and outline, staircase and balcony arrangement, and garden-and-fountain development; so that the sport of searching out different specimens is the very reverse of monotonous repetition. In the course of my extensive wanderings (this is my 10th full day in N. O.) I have explored an almost fabulous number of these delightful hidden paradises—being directed to some by references in books, but stumbling upon others wholly unexpectedly—a far greater delight. My chief victory over private seclusion is that involving a patio famous in every book written about N. O. in the last quarter-century, yet zealously guarded from vulgar sight by the proprietor. This is the celebrated "Patio of the Palm" at 612 Rue Royale, where a titanic Brazilian date palm springs from the soil of a small court and spreads a strange, glamorous green twilight over the whole expanse of flagstones, fountain, and prodigious water-jars. I hung around this place like a thief planning a large-scale cleanup, but was finally rewarded when a large party—evidently friends of the inhabitants—called and strolled about the patio and arcade with the gate open! One thing worth studying is the type of great fan window which usually fronts on these ancient courtyards. I think at least one of these is shewn in the folder I recently sent you.

..... Yesterday afternoon around sunset I took the ferry across the river to the suburb of Algiers; thus navigating the Mississippi for the first time, and for the first time treading soil *west* of the Mississippi. . .

.....

Well—best wishes!—

HP

552. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Tuesday,  
July 5, 1932.

Dear Jim:—

....

When I reached here at seven-thirty p. m. Friday my aunt was in a painless semi-coma, and it is doubtful whether she recognised me. . . . The end was so peaceful and unconscious that I could not believe a change had occurred when the nurse declared it final.

Services will be held tomorrow at the Knowles Funeral Chapel on the ancient hill not far from here—and close to where my aunt and Dr. Clark lived in and around 1910. Although Mrs. Clark had no more use for orthodox cant and childish immortality myths than I, the services will be conducted in the ancient Church of England tradition by the Rev. Alfred Johnson, a venerable friend of both Phillips and Clark families who also officiated for my mother in 1921. My aunt would have preferred him, since the poetry of the Anglican ritual is a thing of eternal beauty aside from its hollow meaning, whereas the jargon of the Baptists (her immediate ancestral tradition) and other Evangelicals contains only the hollowness without the beauty. She had no patience, intellectually, with any sects save the Anglican and Unitarian; though she was still technically on the rolls of the old first Baptist Church.

...

.. The suddenness of the event is both bewildering and merciful—the latter because we cannot yet realise, *subjectively*, that it has actually occurred at all. It would, for example, seem incredibly unnatural to disturb the pillows now arranged for my aunt in the rocker beside my centre-table—her accustomed reading-place each evening. ....

Yr. obt.,

H. P. L.



553. TO MAURICE W. MOE

July 12, 1932

O Sage:—

...  
My return to Brooklyn from Richmond—via Fredericksburg, Washington, Annapolis, and Philadelphia—was carried out according to schedule; but upon the sixth day of my visit to Loveman I received a disastrous telegram which sent me hastening home on the first train, and caused 1932 to take its place as a black year for this household. It told of the sudden sinking of my semi-invalid aunt Mrs. Clark, (age seventy-six) whose decade-long neuritic and arthritic pains had produced an unexpected weakening and collapse of the general organic system. Hope of survival had been abandoned—though the pains themselves, after a burst of extraordinary acuteness, had mercifully subsided. When I reached home—eight hours after receiving the telegram on the morning of July first—my aunt was in a semi-coma out of which she never emerged. The next day showed no visible change, though the doctor thought she was weaker and gave her but twenty-four hours to live. Sadly enough, his prophecy was correct; for the end came at one-twenty p. m. Sunday the third—so peacefully and imperceptibly that I could not for some time believe that the dread change had actually taken place. Services were held on the sixth—for traditional reasons, according to the ancient Anglican ritual, though my aunt had no more belief in childish theology and immortality-myths than I have—and interment took place in the Clark lot in old Swan Point Cemetery (in another lot in which I shall myself be buried) among the sepulchres of Clark ancestors extending back to 1711. Green wooded slopes rise beside the mournful spot, and close by is a great hollow tree inhabited by a woodpecker whose quaint twittering my aunt would have loved to hear in life.

The vacuum created in this household is easy to imagine, since my aunt was its presiding genius and animating spirit. It will be impossible for me to get concentrated on any project of moment for some time to come—and meanwhile there intervenes the painful task of distributing

my aunt's effects . . . whose familiar arrangement, so expressive of her tastes and personality, I dread to disturb. The family is now reduced to my younger aunt—living a mile from here—and myself.

Yr. obt. Servt.—  
Lo.

554. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Home

July 16, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

I surely appreciate your kind words of sympathy. Everything hereabouts is in more or less of a state of upheaval, but signs of settling down are appearing. It is melancholy to see old, familiar arrangements change. Much old family furniture is now having to be sold or given away—just as it has been at each previous contraction of our dwindling line. However, my younger aunt and I are cramming as much as possible of my elder aunt's effects into our respective quarters. I am taking two antique tables or stands, and a good many old vases, candlesticks, lacquer boxes, paintings, and other non-bulk things. Of course it makes my room overcrowded from the point of view of perfect taste, but I had rather have my surroundings reminiscent of older and better days than merely tasteful or beautiful in an abstract way. Many talk of the joy and freedom of being without possessions, but I am not enough of a Thoreau to share their point of view. With me, contentment consists in having around me as many as possible of the things I have always been used to—furniture, pictures, and the like. I am not making any radical alteration in the arrangement of my room, since I do not wish to be violently reminded of the loss which has occurred. I am now the custodian of all the old family papers and reliques—wills, records, military and civil commissions, daguerreotypes, miniatures, and the like—many of which, so mixed was their former arrangement, I had never seen before. It will be my endeavour to keep them in better order. . . .

Best wishes—  
Yr. obt. HP

555. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

On the cliffs of old Newport—  
Overlooking the boundless Atlantic.  
July 25, 1932

Dear R E H:—

This reply to your admirably interesting and generously proportioned letter of the 13th is undoubtedly going to be wretchedly inadequate, since I have lately been under a severe nervous strain. I am sure, however, that you can excuse the fault in view of the circumstances. Toward the end of my long trip—as I was paying a final visit in Brooklyn—I was summoned home by a telegram of my elder aunt (age 76), long a semi-invalid, but the presiding genius and animating spirit of 10 Barnes St. Arriving on the same day, I found the patient semi-conscious—and peaceful death occurred on July 3d. The resulting vacancy in the household is easy to imagine, and I can hardly adjust myself to the unwelcome change. Meanwhile there has remained the melancholy task of distributing my aunt's furniture, pictures, bric-a-brac, papers, books, and other effects (for she had an unfurnished room, just as I have, being in no health to keep house), so that the nerves of my younger aunt and myself (all that remain of the family) are worn almost to exhaustion.

.....  
I note your observations on chance, and on possible invisible but sentient influences operating from "Outside". Certainly, there is not proof that such entities do *not* exist—and for the purposes of fiction I am glad enough to acknowledge them .... from Tsathoggua to Cthulhu, and Kathulos to Yog-Sothoth! But in sober fact, there is not a particle of evidence to indicate that they *do* exist; hence it is rather fantastic and gratuitous to assume that they do. There is no evidence of their action, so why think they are there? That goes likewise for all gods from Baal to Buddha and Jove to Jehovah.

.....  
.. I've never been able to figure out why people seem to find the artificial paradise of alcoholic excitation so necessary to their happiness. I'm 42—or will be next month—and have never touched alcoholic

liquor in any form .... nor do I ever intend to do so. And yet I don't feel any dearth of colour or interest in the world around. My imagination seems to work in a fairly satisfying way without the aid of external impetus. I don't see anything at all graceful or attractive about the phenomenon of drunkenness, but on the other hand see in it considerable of an obstacle to the efficient administration of society. I was a prohibitionist until I saw that the law was not working, and I would be again if I thought there were any feasible way of really discouraging the habit of alcohol-drinking. ....

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—  
H P L

556. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Shumath-Ghun—  
Hour of the flight of the Bat  
toward the Black Nebula  
July 26, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Glad your open-letter campaign continues. It certainly seems unjustified for critics to exclude the natural and typical escape-moods of mankind from literary treatment, when these moods form so definite a part of human life and feeling. Probably the pendulum will swing back more or less, though of course spectral tales can never occupy the place they did when intelligent and cultivated people believed in the supernatural. What, to my mind forms the essence of sound weird literature today is not so much the *contradiction* of reality as the *hypothetical extension* of reality. Of course this may involve some *minor* contradictions, but such may be justified for the sake of the end in view. The vast realm of the unplumbed and the unknown which presses down upon us from all sides certainly offers a provocation to the fancy which cannot permanently be resisted. ....

Yrs. in the ritual of the Outer Void—  
E'ch-Pi-El



## 557. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

High Wooded Bluff Above the Seekonk River—  
a mile East of 10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
July 28, 1932

Dear Morse:—

Dunsany is, as you say, dangerous to imitate. That was my own fatal error in 1919-20-21, as you will see from many of my effusions of that time. . . . At his best, he is one of the most important elements in modern literature; and he has certainly influenced me more than any other living writer.

Best wishes—

Yr. most hble. & obt. HPL

## 558. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Precipice of N'Ho above the nameless abysm.  
Hour of the Murmur from Below  
Aug. 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

For the past three days I have been taking advantage of the incredibly low steamboat rates (15¢ round trip), and making diurnal voyages to ancient Newport. It is an admirable relaxation—a two-hour sail past green shores, a ramble through the venerable winding streets of a steeped town still in its colonial state, and a session of reading and writing on the magnificent oceanward cliffs. All three days have been gloriously warm and sunny, and I am getting almost as tanned as I was in Florida last year. . . .

The cliffs where I am now sitting are magnificent. Eastward there is nothing but water and air till Spain is reached. Northeastward is the green Sakonnet peninsula, crowned by the splendid Gothic tower (by

Ralph Adams Cram) attached to the chapel of St. George's School. The whole scene is so attractive that I hate to go home—though boat-time is now close at hand. I shall have to declare a recess and continue this epistle on the boat—though the vibration will play the devil with my penmanship. Well—if it gets too bad, I'll adjourn again and finish this at home. We'll see.

.....

E'ch-Pi-El

## 559. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Aug. 9, 1932.

My dear Morse:—

.....

. . . Last year Wright rejected my best story—a long antarctic novelette entitled *At the Mountains of Madness*—and in so doing revealed such a purely commercial attitude that I have not felt like sending him anything since. He has no sympathy with any story not calculated to please the herd of crude and unimaginative illiterates forming the bulk of his readers—and repeated rejections have such a bad psychological effect on me that I have thought it best to pause for a while. Moreover—my subconscious efforts to meet the Wright standard were having a bad effect on my work. When Putnam's rejected a book-form collection which I had submitted upon their own request, they gave as one of their objections the fact that my tales had an over-explanatory quality—a lack of subtlety—indubitably caused by the influence of the cheap-magazine standard. On reflection, I concurred in this objection—even though I have always (at least since 1925) sought to repudiate the popular commercial tradition. Without doubt, the constant early thunderings of Wright against my debatable endings and obscure implications have had an insidious tendency to make me tone such things down—largely without knowing it. Actually, my stuff falls between two stools. It is not intrinsically good enough for high-grade publication, and it is not

cheaply popular enough to suit the vendors of pulp rags. Thus I am left high and dry as a misfit.

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
HPL

560. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Aug. 12, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... I hope to get north of Boston—in the totality zone—during the eclipse of August 31, but am not sure whether I shall bother to go to Maine for the zone of maximum duration. It really matters relatively little whether an amateur sees the totality for half a minute, or for a minute & a half, so long as he does see it. Even a momentary flash gives the full benefit of the corona. In 1925 (when I was in New York) some of us tramped up into the cold of northern Yonkers to see the January eclipse, but Long (judging from his description) seems to have seen about as much from the roof of his apartment house in 100th St.

..... The other day I had a letter from a not unknown composer—Harold Farnese of Los Angeles, Asst. Director of the Inst. of Mus. Art, & graduate of the Paris Conservatory (whose 1911 prize for composition he won)—asking permission to set two of my *Fungi from Yuggoth* (*Mirage* & *The Elder Pharos*) to music. I felt quite complimented by his request & accompanying comments, & gladly gave the desired permission. I shall be curious to see what he does, in a musical way, with my fantastic images. Another thing that rather pleased me recently was the appearance of an article on fiction writing in *The American Author*, in which the work of Clark Ashton Smith & myself was singled out for citation & quotation in connexion with the handling of narrative elements.

The twilight is now getting too dim for writing—this being indited on Prospect Terrace, a small park not far from 10 Barnes, on the crest of the steep hill overlooking the spires & domes of the lower town outspread to the west 200 feet below. The view from here is especially

alluring & mystery-suggesting at sunset, & I not infrequently bring my work hither at such—& other—times.

With best wishes & renewed expressions of appreciation,

I remain  
Yr most oblig'd & obdt Servt  
HPLovecraft

561. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Providence, R. I.  
August 16, 1932

Dear R E H:—

.....  
As for Outside encroachments—and the subject of supernaturalism, immortality, etc. in general—I am, in theory, not so far from your own position. Actually, of course, we know absolutely nothing of the cosmos beyond the small fragment reachable by our five senses; hence dogmatism in any one direction is as illogical as dogmatism in any other. However, I am not as reluctant as yourself to piece out matters with a few reflections based on *probabilities*. The *absence* of *positive* knowledge does not stop certain views of things from being, according to present indications, *a damn sight likelier* than certain other views. And when anthropology teaches us that certain traditions of theology had a definite origin in some special condition leading to delusion, we are completely justified in maintaining that these traditions—with their manifestly false origin—*have not one chance in a million* of being the true explanations of the things they profess to explain. It would be too much of a coincidence if our ignorant and blundering forefathers should have *happened* to hit without any real data and logical method at their disposal, upon infinitely profound truths in complex matters which even today are unreachable. When we know that the reason people believe in a thing is false, we have a right to guess that the belief itself is exceedingly flimsy. Today all the traditional assumptions regarding "god", "spirit", "immortality", etc. etc. are pretty clearly traced to delusive conditions, fears, and wishes of primitive life. *If such things as gods, immortality, etc. did exist, they could never have been really known by the people who made the myths.* The myths, conclusively, are false—



being natural products of known forms of illusion. And it would be damned improbable if there were any real phenomena existing unknown in space and happening to correspond to these error-born myths! Looking at it another way—simply forget that the old myths do exist, since of course in sizing up an intrinsic situation we must judge it on its own merits and refuse to take the word of any biased persons. Glance over the universe today, *in the light of the knowledge of today*, and see if anything in it or pertaining to it suggests such things as a central consciousness, purpose, ghost-world, or possibility of "life" when life's vehicle is destroyed. No person, thus facing the facts directly and keeping free from the mythical lore of the past, could possibly read into the cosmos the extravagant, irrelevant, clumsy, improbable, and unnecessary things which traditional theologians believe. There is no evidence whatsoever for the existence of the supernatural—and *where no positive evidence exists*, it is mere pedantry to continue to take an extravagant and gratuitous improbability seriously *merely for lack of definite negative evidence*. Theoretically, the improbability *may be possible*—but the chances are so overwhelmingly infinitesimal that they can well rank as negligible. Practically speaking, there is no earthly reason for believing in a deity, immortality, etc. In the absence of any official evidence, it is silly to give the *least* probable explanation an equal footing with explanations which are *really* probable. What little we know of physics and biology leads us to regard life as a form of energy—a mode of motion—in a material physiological medium. When the material medium has ceased to exist, there is no sense in assuming that the form of motion or energy determined by its parts can continue to exist. Thus according to everything which we do know, "immortality" is a wild improbability; and I am not so naive—or so pedantic—as to accept *improbabilities* on equal terms with *probabilities*. What we learn from the study of small sections of force and matter indicates that phenomena are caused by the mutual interaction of forces following fixed patterns inherent in the cosmic order. This holds good for all the phenomena we know—on every conceivable scale. Lacking any contrary evidence, we may *reasonably guess* that this mutual interaction holds good for phenomena on *any* scale—even the largest—so that the entire cosmos may be provisionally considered as a huge field of force without beginning or ending, *whose automatic and kaleidoscopic rearrangements of parts constitute the physical and material phenomena of which we can glimpse*

a fraction. Nobody tries to elevate this *reasonable guess* into a positive dogma, but one is certainly justified in saying that it is *probably* a lot nearer the truth than are the wild myths which were born of primitive ignorance and which insist on being judged arbitrarily without consultation of the real natural evidence around us. I certainly can't see any sensible position to assume aside from that of *complete scepticism tempered by a leaning toward that which existing evidence makes most probable*. All I say is that I think it is *damned unlikely* that anything like a central cosmic will, a spirit world, or an eternal survival of personality exist. They are the most preposterous and unjustified of all the guesses which can be made about the universe, and I am not enough of a hair-splitter to pretend that I don't regard them as arrant and negligible moonshine. In theory I am an *agnostic*, but pending the appearance of radical evidence I must be classed, practically and provisionally, as an *atheist*. The chances of theism's truth being to my mind so microscopically small, I would be a pedant and a hypocrite to call myself anything else. As for *arguments*—I can't afford to detest them, since they are all that ever bring out the truth about anything. We know nothing except through logical analysis, and if we reject that sole connexion with reality we might as well stop trying to be adults and retreat into the capricious dream-world of infantility. There is a craving for truth inherent in the human personality; and when childish myth-making is outgrown, this instinct can be satisfied only through logical investigation. The greater the civilisation, the greater the demand for *real facts*—hence the early philosophic development of the Greeks, a superior race, contrasted with the irrational and inquiry-shunning religious orthodoxy of the less emotionally evolved Semitic nations. The Greek speculative mind is probably the most perfect product of this part of the space-time continuum—the most delicately and highly organised form which matter and energy have ever assumed in the history of the solar system and probably of the galactic system as a whole. The Greeks were certainly our superiors—to the extent, perhaps, that we are the superiors of the duller brachycephalic races. They showed an eager alertness in many fields of cerebral experience from which we of today either retire in defeat or shrink in indolence, timidity, or confusion.

As for liquor—I read with extreme interest your exposition of some of its aspects and effects, which confirms my contention that, in general, it is for oblivion rather than for mere heightened sensation that the

Nordic (as distinguished from the Latin) drinks. I can sympathise with the argument of those who would tend to grant the hard-pressed classes the surcease of drink as a compensation for their burdens and helplessness; yet after all I can't believe that this is as great a favour to the oppressed as it seems on the surface. The more drink-sodden they get, the worse their biological stock becomes, and the less chance they have of getting out of their rut either by individual success or by concerted political action toward a more equitable social order. If some rich industrialists would like to keep the masses sober in order to make them good workmen, there are others who would like to keep them poisoned with alcohol to prevent them from thinking, organising, and exerting political pressure. It seems to me that at this late stage of social evolution, when social and economic factors are better understood than formerly, it would be wiser to study means for the reduction of general misery through the controlled allocation of labouring opportunities, the granting of old-age pensions and unemployment insurance, and the gradual undermining of the excess-profit motive in favour of a supply-and-coördination motive, instead of condoning the woes of the helpless and giving them poison to make them forget about it. However—time will tell. I greatly doubt, after all, whether the needed social changes will be brought about through the real intelligence and conscious planning of the lower orders. Perhaps it's just as well to let them have their poison for the time being, if it does them any good. Actually, I fancy that the part played by the masses in social reorganisation will be largely one of *intimidation*. They can't be expected to stand a mechanised civilisation which gives them less and less chance for food, shelter, and endurable comfort. After a certain stage, they will undoubtedly begin to feel that they aren't getting enough out of the existing order to warrant their upholding it—and from their point of view they will be right. Then the signs of uprising will appear, and even the entrenched industrialists will recognise that something will have to be done. Being men of sense at bottom despite their present confused myopia, they will probably see the need of some new division of the fruits of industry, and will at last call in the perfectly disinterested sociological planners—the men of broad culture and historic perspective whom they have previously despised as mere academic theorists—who have some chance of devising workable middle courses. Rather than let an infuriated mob set up a communist state or drag society into complete anarchical chaos,

the industrialists will probably consent to the enforcement of a fascistic regime under which all citizens will be ensured a tolerable minimum of subsistence in exchange for orderly conduct and a willingness to labour when labouring opportunities exist. They will accept their overwhelmingly reduced profits as an alternative preferable to complete collapse and business-social annihilation. Such, at least, is a reasonable speculation—though it would be hard to guess at the probable time-period involved. And of course some unforeseen factor may make it all wrong anyway. But on the whole, I think the labourer's best friend is the man who tries to lighten his load a trifle, rather than the one who strives to feed him a poison which pushes him deeper in the gutter and makes each generation of his stock more and more diseased and mentally inferior. Under the latter policy, a nation (barring revolutionary upsets) would be likely to split into two races—an evolved upper type ruling over a debased horde of brainless semi-automata—as in H. G. Wells's story of *The Time Machine*.

....

... It takes tact and resistance to preserve a teetotalling policy in the face of existing conventions; though if one's dislike of the drinking tradition be sufficiently strong, one can usually find a way to keep dry without committing too many *gaucheries*. One may be regarded as a bit eccentric by many, and disliked as a prig by a few—but what's that to a man of independent convictions and a firmly fixed aesthetic attitude in the matter? I am of the third generation of non-drinkers on both sides, though there is plenty of liquor-consumption to be noted in my remoter heredity and in certain collateral branches. .... In addition, I have a physical loathing for the smell of alcoholic beverages of all kinds. From beer to claret, and port to whiskey, a whiff of any one of them is almost an emetic to me.

.....

You are right in estimating the difficulty of dealing with sanguinary themes without verging on the borderline of that which disgusts. There is no rigid set of rules governing such matters, for the net impression of any incident depends to a tremendous extent on surrounding circumstances involving both the incident itself and the manner of its narration. In the absence of rigid rules one has to depend mostly upon one's innate sense of appropriateness—taking into account the type of production one is composing. History and science can be franker than



fiction—and indeed must be absolutely frank if they are to be of any value. The historical novel has some of the characteristics of history, and certainly should not tone things down so far as to give a false picture of the period covered. In general, I think that sensitive people are disgusted more quickly with repulsive details on a *small* scale than with equally sanguinary matters on a broad or epic scale. The mowing down of an army arouses a sense of disgust less quickly than does the vivisection of a single individual. In wholesale slaughter the problem is not so much how to avoid disgust, as how to avoid an appearance of disproportion and improbability. Criticisms of large-scale battle scenes are usually based not on the score of grisliness, but on that of *monotony*. That is, critics believe that where repetitions of descriptions of slaughter have a tendency to lose force through their frequency; and that a battle may often be more vividly conveyed by the glancing citation of typical incidents plus a general statement of its outcome. This may or may not be good criticism. Really, one has to make an independent judgment in each individual case. What is more universal is the truth that sanguinary passages become weak and almost *comical* when it is apparent that they have been dragged in by the heels—that the author has deliberately twisted his story to provide an excuse for introducing them. Such an arrangement violates one's sense of probability and proportion. Bloodshed—like everything else—should be depicted in fiction *only in that proportion in which it occurs in real life*. When an author is depicting an age and scene where bloodshed played an inconceivably greater part in life than it does in any well-known age and scene, his problem is indeed great—as you justly point out. The solution probably lies in preliminary explanation. Somewhere, earlier in the narrative, the reader must be specifically informed of the difference of conditions between the depicted scene and his own; and thus prepared for events which might seem out of proportion according to his ordinary bases of judgment. As for the scenes of *individual* torture such as appear in the work of Quinn, Capt. Meek, and other pulp idols—I think most of them are in rather doubtful taste. While literature must reserve the right to portray *anything in its proper proportion*, it is certainly a fact that these descriptions are *out of all proportion* to the real significance in life of the various harrowing details involved. It is only too obvious that they have been devised to titillate the morbid emotions of a very low-grade class of reader—for the reaction of sensitive and intelligent people is

usually something extending from mere boredom to violent repulsion. These torture-incidents are wholly without imaginative appeal or dramatic bearing, and cannot have any conceivable purpose except to cater to the diseased taste of a certain type of semi-illiterate scum. Too bad Wright is so much of a commercialist as to encourage them.

.....

Regarding the "bonus army" and its dispersal—most persons in the east, especially those who saw the gathering at first-hand in Washington, seem to think that no other course could well have been pursued. . . . The idea of marching on a capital with the idea of influencing legislation is at best a crazy one and at worst a dangerously revolutionary one. No end other than the present one could have been expected. Still, one must sympathise with the "marchers" themselves, for they were in most cases genuinely needy persons, largely ignorant and easily swayed. Chief blame rests with the demagogues who encouraged their manifestly futile and potentially dangerous flourish. But the important point is that no one wished them any evil at any stage of the proceedings. Pressure was used only when they became a probable menace.

The question of the bonus itself is much deeper, and subject to any amount of controversy. No actual *debt* is involved in a legal sense, and in the case of "veterans" who did not see service in France it is problematical whether the gift ought ever to have been promised. On the other hand, so much was asked of those who actually did see service, that some special preference or compensation in their case is clearly a very graceful thing. The problem is whether this especial form of favour at this especial time is an advisable thing. If any order of precedence has to be adopted in relieving the needy, genuine veterans ought certainly to come first—but this arbitrary granting of certain sums to veterans *only*, and to veterans who are solvent as well as to those who are in need, is open to objection on many scores. Many persons of my acquaintance who are both war veterans and hard pressed financially are unqualifiedly against the measure—as, I believe, is the American Legion as a body. It is bewilderingly hard for any layman to have any really intelligent opinion on the subject. I find myself sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other. It might be that the enactment of such a measure under popular pressure would prove a valuable entering wedge in the future's necessary task of breaking down conservative resistance to federal aid programmes in general. On the other hand, it might prove

the signal for other and more irrational clamours for special privileges on the part of various groups and interests. There would, perhaps, be campaigns of intimidation in favour of a "farmers' bonus" or a "boiler-makers' bonus". It might also set a precedent for the custom of mob assemblage and the physical threatening of legislators. Only later historians can render a truly impartial verdict.

Meanwhile any legislation which can loosen the myopic and self-complacent supremacy of the larger industries is to be encouraged. It would probably be impossible and impracticable to try to dissolve these industries into smaller ones, for the whole trend of effective operation is toward unification; but it is indeed practicable and advisable to combat as far as possible their irresponsible abuse of power and their control of governmental processes. . . .

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
HPL

562. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Aug. 24, 1932.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Many thanks for the attractive cards of Mt. Hood. I wouldn't mind seeing some good-sized mountains sooner or later—my mountainous experience having been confined to a single excursion (1927) to New Hampshire's White Mountains. On that occasion I took the cog-wheel railway up Mt. Washington, but was deprived by sudden mists of a view from the summit. Still, it was spectral up there—with no sign of the earth below, & cosmic winds sweeping by from out of the unknown depths of space. I felt more isolated from this planet—& more potentially in touch with the unplumbed abysses of outer ether—than on any other occasion. The image lingers, & I may make fictional use of it sooner or later.

..... As for the anthology—you really ought not to take the trouble & expense of sending me a permanent copy. Moreover—if any permanent copy *were* sent, the present one would be good enough—

for the spot on the flyleaf is the merest trifle. I was pleased to see, at the head of the *prose* extracts, a bit by my good old friend Morton—whom I think I mentioned as a visitor here Aug. 2-6. He is a trifle old-school & spread-English in his oratory, but eloquent & sincere for all that—and a great old boy generally. He is the grandson of Rev. S. F. Smith, author of "My Country, 'tis of Thee". . . . .

With all good wishes—  
Yrs. most sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

563. TO JAMES F. MORTON

On the Rail-way Coach in the New-Hampshire  
Grants, lately call'd the province of Ver-mont.  
Sepr. 3, 1932, 3 a. m.

Egregious Epitome of Exalted Eminence:—

..... Well—the card from me an' Culinarius no doubt appris'd you of our eclipse success. Grandpa is in the two-corona class now—whereas you may get a rainy day in Peru in '37! In Prov. I am told it was rainy. Boston got a good view of its 99% obscuration—but as near as Medford it was half-ruin'd by clouds. I'm hoping that Smithy had as good luck at Haverhill (two sec. totality) as we did at Newburyport.

As for harrowing details—we reached Bossy Gillis's burg long before the eclipse started, and chose an hilltop meadow with a wide view—near the northern end of High Street—as our observatory. The sky was mottled, and naturally we were damn anxious—but the sun came out every little while and gave us long glimpses of the waxing spectacle. The aspect of the landskip did not change in tone until the solar crescent was rather small, and then a kind of sunset vividness became apparent. When the crescent waned to extreme thinness, the scene grew strange and spectral—an almost deathlike quality inhering in the sickly yellowish light. Just about that time the sun went under a cloud, and our expedition commenced cursing in 33⅓ different languages including Ido. At last, though, the thin thread of the pre-totally glitter emerged into a large patch of absolutely clear sky. The outspread valleys faded



into unnatural night—Jupiter came out in the deep-violet heavens—ghoully shadow-bands raced along the winding white clouds—the last beaded strip of glitter vanished—and the pale corona flicker'd into aureolar radiance around the black disc of the obscuring moon. We were seeing the real show! Though Newburyport was by no means close to the line of maximum duration, the totality lasted for a surprisingly long time—long enough for the impression to sink ineffaceably in. It would have been foolish if we had gone up to the crowded central line in Maine or New Hampshire. The earth was darken'd much more pronouncedly than in our marrow-congealing ordeal of '25, (the coldness of this damn train takes my memory back to that harrowing occasion!) tho' the corona was not so bright. There was a suggestion of a streamer extending above and to the left of the disc, with a shorter corresponding streamer below and to the right. We absorb'd the whole exhibition with open eyes and gaping mouths—I chalking down II whilst Khul-i-N'hari had to be content with I. Too bad about youse poor one-eclipse guys! Finally the beaded crescent reëmerged, the valleys glow'd again in faint, eerie light, and the various partial phases were repeated in reverse order. The marvel was over, and accustom'd things resum'd their wonted sway.

Yr. obt. Grandsire—  
Theobaldus

564. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Sept. 18, 1732

Greetings, O Aristoteles Rhetor!

.. Ah, me—the simple sports of idyllick 1900! Who wou'd not, in an aera of unrest and disillusion, exchange all the maturity, taste, and penetration of today for the innocent, expansive dreams of our century's infancy? Ping-pong . . . a ride in an open trolley-car with striped, flapping awnings . . . a glass of Phosa at the Whealmen's Rest after a fifteen-mile spin . . . hansom cabs in front of Boston's new Hotel Touraine . . . headlines of the Boer War . . . those new-fangled suburban cars with vestibules . . . necks craned to see the steam-propelled horseless phaëton (last week in Boston one saw a very clever

electric carriage!) . . . sportsmen in trim gigs bound for the trotting at Narragansett Park . . . the Function House, Patrick J. Cronin, Prop., Ales, Wines, and Liquors . . . Jerome Kennedy and Son, All-Wool Suits, \$9.00 . . . Providence Opera House, Week of September 8, John Cart presents Richard Gold in a new Musical Comedy, *The Burgomaster*, Words by Frank Pixley, Music by Gustav Luders . . . new electric trains to Bristol and Fall River . . . talk of electrifying the New York elevated and using Sprague's new multiple-unit system . . . some of the very new houses wired for electric lights just like the downtown shops . . . fine, brilliant 16 c. p. bulbs . . . Vote for McKinley and Roosevelt . . . will the Pan-American be as good as the Chicago Fair? . . . put me off at Buffalo! . . . what kind of a King will the sporty Prince of Wales make now that Victoria is dead? . . . telephones are getting common in private houses . . . successful wireless messages from Block Island . . . Nikola Tesla reports signals from Mars . . . this new metal Radium seems to be queer stuff—actually shoots off X-rays! . . . prudish whispers—the nameless author of *The Importance of Being Earnest* has just died in a cheap Paris hotel . . . collegiate sofa-pillows—"Reflections", "Pipe Dreams", "The Summer Girl", "The Touch-down" . . . recitations of Kipling . . . "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion" . . . *David Harum* . . . *Caleb West* . . . *To Have and to Hold* . . . E. H. Sothern in Justin McCarthy's Romantic Drama, *If I Were King* . . . *Way Down East* . . . *Sog Harbor* . . . *Sky Farm* . . . *York State Folks* . . . Neil Burgess in *The County Fair* . . . Mrs. Leslie Carter in *Zaza* (shocking!) . . . Maude Adams in *The Little Minister* . . . quartette at Keith's Continuous Vaudeville—*When the Harvest Moon is Shining on the River* . . . Aguinaldo captured . . . *Life of Admiral Dewey*, fully illustrated, special subscription edition, only \$3.75 . . . that awful book by Paul Dresser's queer brother—*Sister Carrie* . . . Peter F. Dailey at the Opera House in *Hodge, Podge, and Co.* . . . Copeland's Livery Stable . . . cake-walks . . . "Oh, Oh, Miss Phoebe" . . . Gilmore's Band . . . Life's Gibson Calendar for 1902—A Handsome Gift or Souvenir . . . Edison Phonographs . . . the new gramophones that use flat discs . . . T. & C. pyrography outfits, \$1.80 . . . Braun's Carbon Prints . . . Famous Fasso Corsets . . . Studebaker Carriages and Wagons . . . Angelus Pianola . . . the new cat book by Agnes Rapplier . . . Hand Sapolio, just on the mar-

ket . . . . . "Good Morning! Have you used Pears' Soap?" . . . . . go 'way back and sit down . . . . . Mt. Pelée . . . . . Chauncey Olcott . . . . . new strike in the Klondike . . . . . Ale that is Ale, from the Highland Spring . . . . . Anti-Imperialism . . . . . "The Riddle of the Universe" . . . . . Nova Persei . . . . . disturbing works on sociology by that fellow Lester Ward . . . . . the Sunday sermon . . . . . Sweet Caporal . . . . . Egyptian Deities . . . . . these new houses with colonial gambrel roofs . . . . . Mc Clure's Magazine . . . . . Lincoln Steffens . . . . . "The Shame of Minneapolis" . . . . . moral purpose . . . . . B. & L. Cut Plug . . . . . germs . . . . . The Open Door . . . . . Hague Conference . . . . . anti-trust act . . . . . Our New Possessions . . . . . cable to Hawaii . . . . . going down to Virginia to see the eclipse of May 28, 1900, as total? . . . . . Dreyfus's book . . . . . monster G. A. R. procession . . . . . talk of building a subway in New York longer than Boston's . . . . . "ideals" . . . . . "Georgia Camp Meeting" on the mandolin . . . . . those new flat felt hats the college boys are wearing . . . . . peg-top trousers . . . . . tan topcoats . . . . . rag-time . . . . . *Hello, Mah Baby* . . . . . Lombroso . . . . . translations of that terrible, irreverent person, Anatole France . . . . . who *is* this 'Baudelaire' that the fast literary set are talking about? . . . . . and who *could* have written that nasty, cynical *Book of Jade*?—internal evidence indicates a Harvard student . . . . . Ibsen . . . . . do you *approve* of Shaw? . . . . . Santos-Dumont . . . . . Boxers . . . . . Tien-Tsin . . . . . Siege of the Legations . . . . . bold Kaiser Wilhelm, Champion of the Western World . . . . . the Coal Strike . . . . . new typewriters with visible writing . . . . . Remex Fountain Pen . . . . . Carter's Black-Letter Ink . . . . . Teddy! . . . . . Senator Aldrich . . . . . Platt . . . . . Hanna . . . . . Norris's *McTeague*—so unpleasant and unwholesome! . . . . . Carrie Nation . . . . . Doxie . . . . . Lyman Abbott . . . . . New York reservoir at 40th to 42nd St. all gone, to make room for new library . . . . . Is Doyle going to write any more Sherlock Holmes books? . . . . . *In the Good Old Summer Time* . . . . . *Just As the Sun Went Down* . . . . . Stephen Crane . . . . . W. C. Morrow . . . . . Richard Harding Davis . . . . . Jack London . . . . . have you heard of that queer old codger Ambrose Bierce, who writes the awful morbid stories syndicated in the papers? . . . . . *The Yellow Kid* . . . . . Buster Brown . . . . . smart boy named Henry Louis Mencken—lives in Baltimore—contributing light verse to *Bookman*, *Leslie's*, *New England Magazine*, etc.—wonder if he'll amount to much? . . . . . Paul Elmer More, leading

critick of serious people . . . . . note from *Appleton Crescent*—Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Galpin of 536 College Ave. are receiving congratulations on the birth of a son, Alfred Jr., on November 8th—1901 . . . . . Harlem note in the *New York Tribune* for 1902—"Dr. and Mrs. Frank Belknap Long are receiving congratulations on the birth of a son, Frank Belknap Jr., on April 27th . . . . . *Poemata Minora*, by H. P. Lovecraft (pencil—one copy) published by the *Royal Press*, Providence, Sept. 1902 . . . . . other works by the same author, *The Mysterious Ship*, *The Secret of the Grave*, *Antarctic Atlas*, *Voyages of Capt. Ross*, *R. N.*, *Wilkes's Explorations*, *Mythology for the Young*, *Chemistry*, etc. etc. sold by the *Royal Press* at reasonable rates in exclusive editions of one copy each . . . . . M. W. Moe piles up brilliant record at University of Wisconsin . . . . . isn't that new sea author Joseph Conrad gloomy? . . . . . Hardy is *such* a cynic, too bad! . . . . . *The Cosmopolitan*, edited by John Brisben Walker—so much more staid and dignified than *Munsey's*, with all those cheap pictures . . . . . *Browning and King's Magazine* . . . . . "I Want My Clothes!" . . . . . prize amateur photo by Nick Breuhl, Sherwood, Wis. . . . . *At the Sign of the Sphinx*, conducted by Carolyn Wells . . . . . the new cheap Brownie Camera . . . . . Sen-Sen . . . . . Munyon's Inhaler . . . . . *There is Hope!* . . . . . all the fashionable 1894 Vandykes shaved off . . . . . "A Bird in a Gilded Cage" . . . . . Jeffries knocks out Fitzsimmons . . . . . Terry McGovern . . . . . Kid McCoy . . . . . that silly, affected painter Whistler, who was flunked out of West Point, has just died! His freakish stuff won't last! . . . . . They say the St. Louis fair is going to beat the Pan-American! . . . . . new stamp albums with space for Pan-American and King Edward stamps . . . . . such trouble negotiating a Panama Canal treaty with Colombia! . . . . . football haircuts . . . . . "Coffin-nails" . . . . . bars to lower on the left-hand side of open trolley-cars . . . . . acetylene bicycle lamps . . . . . autosopes at the shore resorts . . . . . new biograph travel films to chase the audiences out of Keith's at six-o'clock . . . . . *Harper's Round-Table* has failed . . . . . premiums for *Youths' Companion* subscriptions . . . . . everybody is getting interested in colonial houses and antique furniture—as if they could compare with French roofs and golden oak! . . . . . Red Trading Stamps . . . . . *The Prince of Pilsen* . . . . . *Babes in Toyland* . . . . . *King Dodo* . . . . . *The Sultan of Sulu* . . . . . the Invicta steam roller . . . . . "get a horse!" . . . . . "The Lightning Conductor", by C. N. & A. M. Williamson . . . . . *Janice*



*Meredith, Richard Carvel* . . . . . *The Prisoner of Zenda* . . . . . Stanley J. Weyman . . . . . Yeats and Synge—queer fellows . . . . . Josiah Royce . . . . . new interurban trolley lines . . . . . "can you make anything of this new fellow Santayana, with his *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*? Queer stuff—but he's only a foreigner! I'm sure I much prefer dear William James—though even he isn't as sure about ultimate things as our pastor, Dr. F. Latt Uhlanke. For real spiritual satisfaction, give me Dr. Uhlanke every time!" . . . . . "Smoky Mokes" . . . . . Weber and Fields . . . . . Edna May . . . . . Charley Grapewin . . . . . Buffalo Bill . . . . . who are these people—Schopenhauer and Nietzsche—that the collegians discuss? . . . . . they say that Krutch boy is getting mighty studious for a ten-year-old . . . . . Have you read John Dewey's *Studies in Logical Theory*? Pretty heavy reading—he's a middle-aged professor at Chicago—and what do you think of the odd things that young fellow—the Hon. Bertrand Russell—has been writing? A mighty queer kind of mathematician, I say! But then—he's the son of that horrid *free-thinker* (yes, really!) Viscount Amberley . . . . . How fortunate that all the foundations of our moral beliefs are secure! ! . . . . . And permanent prosperity will be assured under Roosevelt and Fairbanks . . . . . 1900 . . . . . 1901 . . . . . 1902 . . . . . 1903 . . . . . 1904 . . . . . ping-pong . . . . . puff ties . . . . . "Darktown is Out Tonight" . . . . . Hay-Pauncefote treaty . . . . .

Yr. obt. Loovns.

565. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Sept. 21, 1932

Rex of Rigorous, Recondite, and Rocky Research:—

.. Wandrei's visit was delightful, tho' hamper'd by poor weather and by the visitor's bad case of sunburn—which prevented any great pedestrian or other activity. He will be in to see you before he leaves the pest zone for good. Not a bit of change in him since good old 1927—a great boy! My other guest, Carl Ferdinand Strauch—poet and Asst. Librarian of Muhlenberg University (a friend of Brobst's)—was also highly interesting, and very appreciative of the local antiquities and and-wheres. I took both of the children (whose sojourns, unfortunately, did not

overlap) to see the famous Harris Collection of American Poetry (finest in the world) at the John Hay Library of Brown University, and they were extremely interested in its contents—which includes Belknap, Loveman, Coates, Goodenough, Pearson—and *David V. Bush* in both "before" and "after" states. Perusal of *Mr. Muling* and *Suppose* convuls'd both young Strauch and the librarian. Wandrei's quest at the collection concerned a very fine but forgotten Massachusetts poet—Frederick Tuckerman—who although writing in the Victorian aera escap'd many of its most absurd characteristicstics; also an Harvard youth, Park Barnitz, who killed himself after publishing a remarkable volume of decadent verse (1902) entitled *The Book of Jade* and dedicated to Baudelaire.

Yr. obt.—  
Theobaldus

566. TO HAROLD S. FARNESE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Sept. 22, 1932.

Dear Mr. Farnese:—

Of course, I have always realised that my especial province is fundamentally a very minor one; & that even if I achieved the level of literature, it would be merely a trivial phase of the 'literature of escape'. What I *do* insist upon is that this field, however minor, is a genuine & serious one; & not a mere aspect of naive crudity to be brushed aside by an enlightened age. To my mind, the *sense of the unknown* is an authentic & virtually permanent—even though seldom dominant—part of human personality; an element too basic to be destroyed by the modern world's knowledge that the supernatural does not exist. It is true that we no longer credit the existence of discarnate intelligence & super-physical forces around us, & that consequently the traditional "gothick tale" of spectres and vampires has lost a large part of its power to move our emotions. But in spite of this disillusion there remain two factors largely unaffected—and in one case actually *increased*—by the change:

first, a sense of impatient rebellion against the rigid & ineluctable tyranny of time, space, & natural law—a sense which drives our imaginations to devise all sorts of plausible hypothetical defeats of that tyranny—and second, a burning curiosity concerning the vast reaches of unplumbed and unplumbable cosmic space which press down tantalizingly on all sides of our pitifully tiny sphere of the known. Between these two surviving factors I believe that the field of the weird must necessarily continue to have a reason for existence, & that the nature of man must necessarily still seek occasional expression (even though in limited degree) in symbols & phantasies involving the hypothetical frustration of physical law, & the imaginative extrusion of knowledge & adventure beyond the bounds imposed by reality. That this must be done more subtly than in the past, goes without saying; but I insist that it still must be done now & then. The emotional need for escape from terrestrial certainties is still, with a definite & permanent minority, a genuine and sometimes acute one.

In my own efforts to crystallise this spaceward outreaching, I try to utilise as many as possible of the elements which have, under earlier mental and emotional conditions, given man a symbolic feeling of the unreal, the ethereal, & the mystical—choosing those least attacked by the realistic mental and emotional conditions of the present. Darkness—sunset—dreams—mists—fever—madness—the tomb—the hills—the sea—the sky—the wind—all these, & many other things have seemed to me to retain a certain imaginative potency despite our actual scientific analyses of them. Accordingly I have tried to weave them into a kind of shadowy phantasmagoria which may have the same sort of vague coherence as a cycle of traditional myth or legend—with nebulous backgrounds of Elder Forces & trans-galactic entities which lurk about this infinitesimal planet, (& of course about others as well), establishing outposts thereon, & occasionally brushing aside other accidental forms of life (like human beings) in order to take up full habitation. This is essentially the sort of notion prevalent in most racial mythologies—but an artificial mythology can become subtler & more plausible than a natural one, because it can recognise & adapt itself to the information and moods of the present. The best artificial mythology, of course, is Lord Dunsany's elaborate & consistently developed pantheon of Pegana's gods. Having formed a cosmic pantheon, it remains for the fantasiste to link this "outside" element to the earth in a suitably dramatic &

convincing fashion. This, I have thought, is best done through glancing allusions to immemorially ancient cults & idols & documents attesting the recognition of the "outside" forces by men—or by those terrestrial entities which preceded man. The actual climaxes of tales based on such elements naturally have to do with sudden latter-day intrusions of forgotten elder forces on the placid surface of the known—either active intrusions, or revelations caused by the feverish & presumptuous probing of men into the unknown. Often the merest *hint* that such a forgotten elder force *may* exist is the most effective sort of a climax—indeed, I am not sure but that this may be the *only* sort of climax possible in a truly mature fantasy. I have had many severe criticisms because of the *concrete and tangible* nature of some of my "cosmic horrors". Variants of the general theme include defeats of the visible laws of time—strange juxtapositions of widely separated aeons—& transcensions of the boundary-lines of Euclidean space; these, & the always-fruitful device of a human voyage into forbidden celestial deeps. In every one of these seemingly extravagant conceptions there is a certain amount of imaginative satisfaction for a very genuine emotional need of mankind—if only the subject be handled with adequate subtlety & convincingness.

In the matter of this handling, though, most fantasistes (including, alas, myself) generally fail miserably. We are all tempted to 'lay it on too thick'—with results varying in disastrousness from mere flatness to hilarious absurdity. Critical theories differ regarding the extent to which one may, without producing weakness or suggesting the puerile, overtly employ the paraphernalia of supernaturalism. A large body of taste opposes absolutely the use of *coined names* as applied to strange things & places—thus outlawing my *Yuggoth*, *Thok*, *Nithon*, etc., along with Machen's *Voorish domes* & *Aklo letters*, & Poe's *Yaaneke*, *Nis*, *Auber*, etc. It is really a perplexing question to determine just what will strike the sensible reader right, & what will impress him as childish & meaningless stage-paraphernalia. No two readers, of course, are alike, so one must use his own judgment about how wide a circle to aim at. . . . . The supernatural ought properly to be *suggested* rather than openly presented, & the impossible marvels ought as far as feasible to consist of *hypothetical extensions of reality* rather than direct & obvious *contradictions of reality*.

But pray pardon this overdose of rambling theory & abstraction! Regarding your suggestion that I coöperate in a musical drama with the



score by yourself—I really feel quite overwhelmed by the force of the implied compliment! If I were able to do justice to such an enterprise, there is certainly nothing I would rather attempt—for despite a profound ignorance of music, I am acutely sensible of its marvellous power, & keenly appreciative of its ability to enhance the effect of allied forms of expression. But over against this looms the fact that I have *no experience whatever in dramatic composition*—& how is a frank novice to evolve anything capable of correlation with the score of an accomplished composer? I am only too well aware that the construction of an effective drama demands a vastly greater fund of technique than one can pick up haphazard from the plays & operas one has casually & uncritically read or witnessed.

Despite my tremendous admiration for things like Dunsany's *Gods of the Mountain* or O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*, I have never as yet employed drama as a medium of expression. Probably the reason is that in the sort of work I am trying to do human characters matter very little. They are only incidental details, & can well be left in the puppet stage—since the real protagonists of my tales are not organic beings at all, but simply *phenomena*. I doubt if I have the ability to handle human characters in a lifelike way, for they impress my imagination so much less than do the more impersonal forces of nature. This being so, it is clear that dialogue has never been of much use to me. If I had characters talk, it would be merely to register through them the abnormal mutations of their environment. To create the living figures necessary to vitalise a music-drama of any ordinary sort, therefore, would seem to be a task definitely beyond me. ....

Yrs. most cordially & sincerely,  
H. P. Lovecraft

567. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

September 24, 1932

Jonckheer:—

.....  
As for hack fiction—it is all right, and an admirable source of revenue, if one can grind it out without spoiling one's ability to create

genuine material. The trouble is that not many can preserve the requisite duality. I can't—and that's why I'm cutting out magazine attempts. ....

My objection to your thesis that hack work gives valuable practice, is that the sort of glib technique developed by popular writing is of *the absolutely wrong sort*—so that it forms a *grave handicap* rather than an asset when one tries to write something really worth reading. Virtually all the adroit tricks of the flashy Satevepost and Cosmopolitan school of writers are mere artificial affectations contrary to the spirit of sincere literature. The seriously aspiring writer's first lesson is to *forget*, not to *cultivate*, these puerile and flimsy smoothnesses—for there is no bond in common between real writing and the unctuous hokum of the bourgeoisie's favourite picture-books. Between popular junk and actual literature there is only war to the death. (Read Edward J. O'Brien's exposé of commercial fiction—*The Dance of the Machines*. I've just picked up a copy for a quarter—as a remainder.) The genuine aspirant must forget all about commercial standards and start in with high-grade unremunerative magazines like *Pagany*, *Contempo*, *The Midland*, etc. Eventually—if he has it in him (as I *haven't*)—he will make *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, etc. But he must think of LITERATURE, NOT MONEY, and be careful to have enough other activities to keep him clothed, lodged, and fed. He must never think of writing as a source of revenue. If the revenue comes, well and good—but that must never be an object or matter of chief interest. There is no reason for a writer to think of authorship as a source of money if he has another job sufficient to keep him decently clothed, fed, and lodged. Art is not a business—it is life itself, the thing in order to enjoy while people work at other and more legitimately commercial businesses. It is like travel, sports, or the other recreational things which we enjoy apart from gainful work. Of course, in addition to literature there is also the fairly honest trade of writing cheap fiction to order to suit cheap people. But usually the people who follow that skilled and admittedly difficult industry are not the same sort of people who create literature. One kind of man writes artificial hokum for pay and plays golf as recreation. Another and more sensitive sort does any old thing for pay and writes or attempts literature as a recreation or justification for being alive. This latter sort really writes primarily to relieve his emotions—because he can't help writing. And there isn't much of a bridge between the two types. Commercialism gets you nowhere in literature. It is certain that the cheap tricks I have unconsciously picked up

from W. T. writing were instrumental in causing Putnam's to reject my MSS. last year. Best-sellerism and literature won't mix!

.....

Best wishes—

Yr. obt. Grandpa O'Casey

568. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Opening of the First Jumada

Year of the Hegira 1351

Oct. 3, 1932

Abdul Alhazred to Malik Taus, Salutations and  
Protection from Eblis:—

Needless to say, I perused your Randolph Carter sequel with the keenest interest, pleasure, and appreciation. You certainly have a splendid conception there, and I profoundly hope we can get it into publishable shape sooner or later. It would be unfair to the idea to try to handle it now—amidst my desperate rush of previous work—but before long I trust I can give it the leisurely consideration it deserves. Of course, in the end I may have to echo your confession of being buffaloeed—but I'll have a try first. Just now I can hardly predict what I'll try to do—but I fancy the changes may (if you don't mind) be quite considerable. In the first place, the style ought perhaps to be less unlike that of *The Silver Key*. Secondly, in describing Carter's exit from the world of reality the fact that he has returned to a boyhood stage ought to be allowed for. This is mentioned in *The Silver Key*. Third—the transition, and the entrance to the world of illusion, ought to be *infinitely subtilised*. There must be no abrupt entry to a tangible and describable vault inside the hill, but rather a vague atomic filtration into a world hardly describable in terms of matter. The Presence ought to be less conclusively anthropomorphic, and there ought to be much less prosaic clear-cutness about the interchange of speech or thought betwixt Carter and the Presence. Whether we had better introduce any new elements connected with Carter's exposure to forbidden gulfs of cosmic geometry remains to be seen. The action as you have it ought certainly to be pre-

served in essentials. And right here two problems come up. First—how to get the ideas to the reader without introducing the element of concrete-sounding dialogue—a jarring note in connexion with vague transpatial abysses and nebulosities—and second, how to avoid the impression of lecture-room didacticism. Hell, but it'll be a tough nut to crack! I admit that I may not be equal to it, but when I get the leisure I'll do what I can. At the end, I think we might possibly devise a more vivid way of introducing the returned Randolph Carter—providing preparation for it, of course, at the opening! I don't know yet just what I want to do on this point—but I'll let instinct guide me when the time comes. It'll be a ticklish job—that's why I don't want to attempt it till I can give it undivided attention under favourable conditions. But let me repeat how much I enjoyed reading the tale. It was a delight to see the dimensional principle so adroitly handled—brought to a focus, as it were—and there is vast cleverness in the way you have Carter return. Even if we can't fix it up for publication it will certainly not have been written in vain.

Yrs. in the brotherhood of the djinns and afrits—

Abdul Alhazred

569. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Octr. 3-5-7, 1932.

Dear R. E. H.:—

.....  
About games—I'm sure I didn't single out *physical* contests as especially artificial. What I did point out was simply that all *arranged* competitions—mental, fortuitous, or physical—which operate under *arbitrarily devised* conditions and rules, are essentially *artificial as compared with the natural battles of forces which they mimic and symbolise*. Thus chess—an intellectual exercise under arranged conditions—is palpably artificial as compared with the use of intellect in grappling with the actually unknown. The intellectuality which wins a difficult chess game is obviously put to a more trivial and artificial end than that which



tries to measure the universe or ascertain the structure of matter. And thus with a physical game like football. The enterprise and prowess displayed in downing an opponent are genuine enough; but their employment in this capacity—where the contest is deliberately arranged and arbitrarily conditioned—is undeniably more *artificial* than would be their employment in defeating an actual invading army which threatened the life and liberty of the group. The crux of the whole matter lies in the *arranged and arbitrary nature* of games. There is a basic difference between the tense drama of meeting and overcoming an *inevitable* problem or obstacle in real life, and the secondary or symbolic drama of meeting or overcoming a problem or obstacle *which has merely been artificially set up*. The chess-player has no breathless sense of uncovering unknown secrets of the cosmos, as the real research scientist has; while the football-player lacks the intense exaltation of knowing that his efforts are necessary to save his country from disaster. Accordingly, I feel quite justified in believing that games and sports ought not be ranked among the major phenomena of life. However—let it not be thought that I am denying them any place whatever in the scheme of things. They have, undoubtedly, the poetic value of symbolism. Chess, by bringing into play the same human forces which are used in conquering the unknown and planning life, is a sort of ceremony in celebration of those forces—an exaltation of the forces as intrinsic things in themselves, all apart from the question of object. And football, by involving the same forces as those which resist enemies and preserve civilisations, may be regarded as a ritual exalting such forces independently of their object. All this is psychologically sound and aesthetically legitimate provided we do not try to invest these mimicries and symbolisations with the full dignity and importance of the *natural* struggles which they symbolise. My own complete personal indifference to games of every sort is merely an individual characteristic, and in no way represents my general views regarding the field in question. This, I trust, clears up the doubtful point. As you see, I don't consider physical games any more artificial than mental ones; but I consider *all* games more artificial than inevitable struggles in real life where the occurrence and conditions are not prearranged.

Your description of the fight with the Oklahoman is surely vivid. Regarding your enjoyment of the event—I think individuals differ widely in their attitude toward *intrinsic processes* as distinguished from

*ultimate objects*. A fight for its own sake would mean nothing to me, either at the time or in retrospect; but on the other hand I would take the greatest satisfaction in having defended myself from aggression, or in having wiped out an insult, by means of combat. Likewise in the mental field. A friend of mine is tremendously fond of chess, cryptograms, difficult puzzles, and anything which sets the cells of his mind working intensely and involvedly—irrespective of purpose or object. Now all that leaves me absolutely cold. I can't get the slightest fun out of the exercise of my mind (or body either) merely for the sake of the exercise. But on the other hand, I take keen delight in using my mind to study out some problem in science, philosophy, or history which really puzzles me. Emphatically, I belong to a definite type of personality in which there is a lack of interest in *intrinsic processes*. The things which interest me are not details, but *broad vistas* of dramatic pageantry in which cosmic laws and the linkage of cause and effect are displayed on a large scale. I love the sweep of history and the excitement of age-long struggles of cultural forces—yet care little for the details of a single diplomatic problem or the particulars of a street-corner fist-fight. I would make a very poor scientific research worker, since in accurate research everything hinges on a tremendous absorption in significant details.

.....

As for the question of the supernatural—one ought really to think as independently as possible, and above all things to avoid being influenced by any one other person—or even any few other persons. It is of course a well-known fact that all sorts of individuals, including those of the highest mental quality, hold all sorts of beliefs—so that one may find persons of the greatest eminence on *both* sides of every question. In such a case of opposite opinion *someone* must obviously be wrong—and only a wide amount of impersonal correlation can enable anybody to make a guess as to which the wrong one is. The reason for this is that most persons possess an emotional bias resulting from the teachings (right or erroneous) of early childhood, which unconsciously influences their intellectual decisions in all matters where there is any latitude whatever. The only persons who are apt to escape this bias are those with a special interest in the intrinsic truth or untruth of the questions involved—an interest stronger than the sense of conformity which would ordinarily cause the externally-imposed influence to oper-

ate. Thus we cannot justly defend a given intellectual position merely because certain men of high calibre happen to hold it. If we look about more widely, we shall see that other persons of high calibre hold an exactly opposite position. All we can do in such a case is to study the evidence itself, analyse what a vast number of different students say about it, and see whether any of the opinions (on either side) seem to be influenced by hereditary or environmental predispositions antagonistic to a perfectly impartial appraisal. In dealing with this latter point it is useful to study the trend of group opinion over a long period of time. In the case of a gradually declining belief which older men tend to cling to and younger men tend to drop, there is great reason to suspect that the belief is unsound—that those who cling to it do so because of early emotional bias, and that perfectly impartial minds approaching the problem freshly and unprejudicedly would never even think of assuming the improbable things which old tradition (formed in primitive ages, when information was lacking) takes for granted. . . . . There is a field of purely abstract knowledge, which does not involve matters of policy, technique, and administration, in which *no one but the avowed scholar* has any reason to claim authority . . . . a field of sheer "is-or-isn'tness" concerning which no practical pursuit qualifies one to act as judge. . . . All that specially qualifies one for speculation in this field is the thorough mastery of the sciences concerned, plus a general training of the intellect in matters of evidence—judging—the usual equipment of the best type of professional scholar. Some of the subjects coming within this field of the impersonally and non-technically abstract are intra-atomic chemistry and physics, non-Euclidean mathematics, astronomy, pure biology, (apart from human physiology) history, anthropology, palaeontology, philosophy, etc. etc. You can easily see the difference between this type of knowledge and the technological type—medicine, engineering, military science, economics, government, etc.—in which practical experience is just as necessary as pure study. Now the subject of the supernatural clearly belongs to the abstract and impersonal field as distinguished from the technological. Nothing in *practical experience* especially qualifies anybody to pass on the validity of transmitted folklore as scaled against the evidence of the external world. It is a matter for the pure scientist and absolutely no one else. On the one hand we must have some idea of what is known of life and the universe—biology, chem-

istry, physics, astronomy, etc.—and on the other hand we must have some idea of the forces behind the formation of the conventional beliefs of primitive times, which our ancestors blindly and uncritically force upon us without regard for reason . . . . an idea obtainable only through such studies as psychology, anthropology, history, and so on. No one but the scientist can give us such ideas—and what is more, *no one* scientist can handle more than a small fraction of the whole matter. For instance, the kind of researcher who studies the dimensions of the universe is of another kind from the one who studies the structure of the atom, while both are unlike the one who investigates the origin of concepts in the primitive human mind. Obviously, it takes a whole staff of unbiassed experts to dig up the necessary data, and even then each one of the experts is too one-sided to have any special authority on the conclusions derivable from the piecing together of all the evidence. To accomplish this piecing together we need scholars of another type—those especially trained in the analysis of evidence *as evidence* and the use of reason in eliminating falsehood and arriving at the truth—or approximations of the truth. This type corresponds to what we traditionally call the *philosophers*, and includes today such men as George Santayana, Oswald Spengler, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Joseph Wood Krutch, and (although he originally started out as a biologist) J. B. S. Haldane. I do not know of any eminent living member of this type of thinker or philosopher who believes in the supernatural. As a rank layman, I have no right to a dogmatic or first-hand opinion on any special subject; but when I view the evidence in the matter of the supernatural (or such of it as a layman can grasp) and analyse the conclusions which different thinkers of eminence draw regarding it, I cannot help drawing the mere common-sense conclusion that traditional beliefs are false and meaningless, and that the real testimony of the external world does nothing whatever to confirm such wild and gratuitous myths as those of immortality, cosmic purpose, and so on. There is no more reason to believe in that stuff than there is to believe in witches—which the most learned and intelligent people once did, when there was less realistic evidence at their disposal to discipline fantastic flights of emotion and imagination.

. . . . . The danger of social revolution increases as popular suffering increases. The explosion came in France, and a still worse one in Russia—and no nation can safely consider itself immune.



All this points to the slow and reluctant growth of a new standard of wealth-distribution—based on selfish expediency, of course, yet none the less beneficial to those suffering under the present standard. It will hold that the existence of large pauper classes—permanently unemployed and unemployable—is dangerous to national equilibrium, and will therefore list among the national necessities some plan of artificially spreading out remunerative employment and compensating those who cannot secure it. At the same time the threat of popular revolution will probably create a minimum wage provision ensuring some degree of basic comfort to the formerly hard-pressed unskilled labourer. An illustration of how such concessions will be extorted is afforded by the incident of the present soldiers' bonus agitation. Here we have a special group seeking a privileged position in the matter of relief, and indulging in large-scale intimidation both physical and political. Though nearly all economists consider the measure unsound, it is likely to be passed in the end—especially in view of the action of the American Legion at its recent convention. (Incidentally, the chief Providence post has been considering withdrawal from the Legion because of the new attitude which reverses last year's policy and violates the non-political clause in the order's constitution.) This incident is probably a very fair sample of the way in which pressure will be exerted to bend the holders of the national wealth into larger and larger handouts. Though at present bitterly opposed by conservatives, this legalised holdup principle is probably a valuable safety-valve for an economically top-heavy nation. Without the relief afforded by legalised holdups, we might eventually suffer the non-legalised holdups exemplified by the French and Russian revolutions. Similar blocs and intimidative societies, composed of labourers and other economic sufferers, will be likely to force the visible government into necessary measures like artificially regulated employment conditions (shorter hours, fewer working days, minimum wage schedules, more persons employed), unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, and the like. The industries behind the government will yield, because they will be afraid of total economic and social collapse if they don't. Their motive in handing out will be the same as that of their earlier grabbing in—simple desire for survival under the best obtainable conditions. It is a case of dog eat dog, like everything else in life. Every man grabs all he can, and the strongest combination wins. Equitable distribution implies merely a more even

balance of strength between opposing combinations. To compensate for the need of reducing profits, the major industries will probably combine and coördinate even more extensively than at present, in order to avoid the waste of duplicate manufacture and unusable surpluses. Something roughly resembling the Soviets' "planned economy" will probably be adopted by the industries of the most capitalistic nations. Agriculture will probably become a corporation matter—with land owned on a large scale by vast organisations, and formed by employees enjoying the advantages of minimum wage laws, unemployment insurance, regulated leisure, and the like. Now of course all these alleviative measures will be administered corruptly. As of old, officials will get rich on graft, and individual cases of hardship will appear. But it would be foolish to claim that the lot of the majority could be as bad as before, when so many literal and non-misinterpretable safeguards for the distribution of wealth will exist. The change in the legalised norm will provide a change in the foundation on which corruption preys; and what is left after corruption has had its fling will be much more favourable to the masses than the corresponding residue today. This will, of course, be accompanied by a general shift in the popular instinctive ideology (as in the already-accomplished matter of slum sanitation and municipal relief); so that it will no longer be thought possible to allow industries to depress living conditions below a certain level. Such changes in basic, taken-for-granted assumptions are slow in coming, but when they do arrive they have vast potency. For example—what state would think today of tolerating the cruel and barbarous punishments of two centuries and more ago—ear-cropping, branding, drawing and quartering, breaking on the wheel, burning at the stake, etc. etc.? This shift implies a readjustment of public psychology (though not, of course, a change in human instinct itself) which creates an entirely new set of unconscious inhibitions and spontaneous impulses. Similar—or rather, homologous—readjustments of public psychology appear to be taking place regarding economic relationships, and the outcome will probably be a general state of mind in which it will not occur to anybody to try to deprive large sections of the community of the legally ensured security which seems artificial to us, but which will seem only a natural and inevitable attribute of organised society to the generations ahead. Russia is an excellent example of an altered instinctive ideology—though its alterations extend too far, and were secured at too tragically high a cost, to

recommend them to the western world. All this explains why I doubt the truth of dogmatic pessimism just as much as I doubt that of dogmatic optimism. What I have outlined, of course, is only a probable—or perhaps I should say no more than *possible*—turn of events; but it has so many foundations in reason, and is predicted by so many observers of apparent good sense, that I feel it is not likely to be ruled out summarily as a conceivable future. ....

... As for the human race—one may not justly regard it as either an advantage or a detriment to the universe. It simply exists as an inevitable and very temporary natural phenomenon, and the whole fabric is neither better nor worse for the fact of its existing. Indeed, the whole fabric knows nothing whatever about it. Life is a somewhat uncommon cosmic phenomenon resulting when carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen atoms become combined or ionised in a certain way during the cooling of a planetary body's crust, and the subsequent course taken by it depends wholly on the accidental conditions of the planet's history. Probably nothing even remotely like the human race has ever existed before, exists now, or will ever exist again. It would mean too vast a coincidence to have the exact conditions of its evolution repeated anywhere else. No one outside this microscopic earth knows or will ever know that the human race exists. When the breed is extinct, there will be none (unless some other terrestrial species arises to consciousness) to recall that it ever existed. And when this planet is finally frozen to lifelessness by the fading of the sun, there will certainly be not a conceivable grain of evidence left to tell anybody (assuming the existence of other organisms somewhere amidst the scattered galaxies) that any life has ever existed on it. It is all the same to the universe whether man exists or not—hence it flatters the importance of a perfectly negligible type of temporary material organisation to claim that its absence would be preferable to its presence. In truth, man's existence doesn't matter a damn to anything or anybody save himself. From his own standpoint, it might be more merciful for him if he didn't exist.

... Cold gets at me in several different ways—enough to puzzle a doctor. First of all—and before I feel any real discomfort—my muscles stiffen up and become clumsy so that I can't write. I can't write decently under 73° or 74°. From there down to freezing the effect of a falling

temperature is simply increasing discomfort and sluggishness; but after that it begins to be painful to breathe. I can't go out at all under +20°, since the effects are varied and disastrous. First my lungs and throat get sore, and then I become sick at the stomach and lose anything I've eaten. My heart also pounds and palpitates. At about 17° or 16° my muscular and nervous coördination gets all shot to hell, and I have to flounder and stagger like a drunken man. When I try to walk ahead, I feel as if I were trying to swim through some viscous, hampering medium of resistance. Finally, at 15° or 14°, I begin to lose consciousness. Once in Jan. 1928 I passed out entirely, so that the fellow who was with me had to drag me into a warm place to thaw out. Nor is the effect of such an exposure merely temporary. I remain as sick as a dog for hours afterward, and for days I have pain in breathing. If I get many such exposures in succession, the effects last all through the winter. One of those effects is a monstrous swelling of feet and ankles which prevents my wearing shoes. This is probably caused by some interference with the heart action—and it keeps up until the next late spring. I haven't had this trouble since 1930—for during the last 2 winters I have carefully stayed in on all very cold days. Obviously, winter is no time for me—and I may yet have to move down to Florida. My advantage comes in summer, for I literally don't know what it is to be too hot. The hotter it gets, the more energy I seem to have—mental and physical alike. I perspire freely, but am comfortable for all that I can relish temperatures of 97° and 98°, and never want it cooler than 80°. Of course, I don't know how I'd be in those inland regions where the summer temperature gets up around 120°—but judging from the available evidence I could stand it better than most. I believe I'd like the tropics or subtropics—and certainly mean to travel in the West Indies some time.

... I don't care for humour as an ingredient of the weird tale—in fact, I think it is a definitely diluting element. ..

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—

H P L



570. TO HAROLD S. FARNES

From Providence  
Oct. 12, 1932

Dear Mr. Farnese:—

.....  
Your remarks on the sources of musical inspiration interested me vastly. In general, I imagine that all arts involving a free play of fancy have much the same sort of stimuli. Stories often result from the oddest & most seemingly irrelevant ideas & glimpses. I am most often moved to composition by vague landscape, atmospheric, & architectural effects—either first-hand or in pictures—though stories, newspaper cuttings, dreams, & all sorts of other things have lain behind many of my efforts. Some writers have built stories & poems on things no more tangible than stray lines or even titles of other works of literature, while vast numbers have received an impulse from music, painting, & sculpture. I think my own imagination is predominantly *geographical*, for to me there is nothing so fascinating as antiquity & unreality as manifested in the aspect of some strange *region*. . . . .

.....  
I shall, as I said before, be exceedingly glad to hear more of your ideas for a fantastic libretto—and it may well be that I could collaborate on such a thing to much better advantage than I could create it outright. No doubt you would wish to lay the scene on some sunken or forgotten continent such as Atlantis, Mu, or Lemuria—or in the (then tropical) Arctic or Antarctic. The *Antarctic* has always exerted a peculiar fascination over me, & my most ambitious story (rejected by *Weird Tales*) has its scene laid there. . . . .

Yrs. most cordially & sincerely,  
H. P. Lovecraft

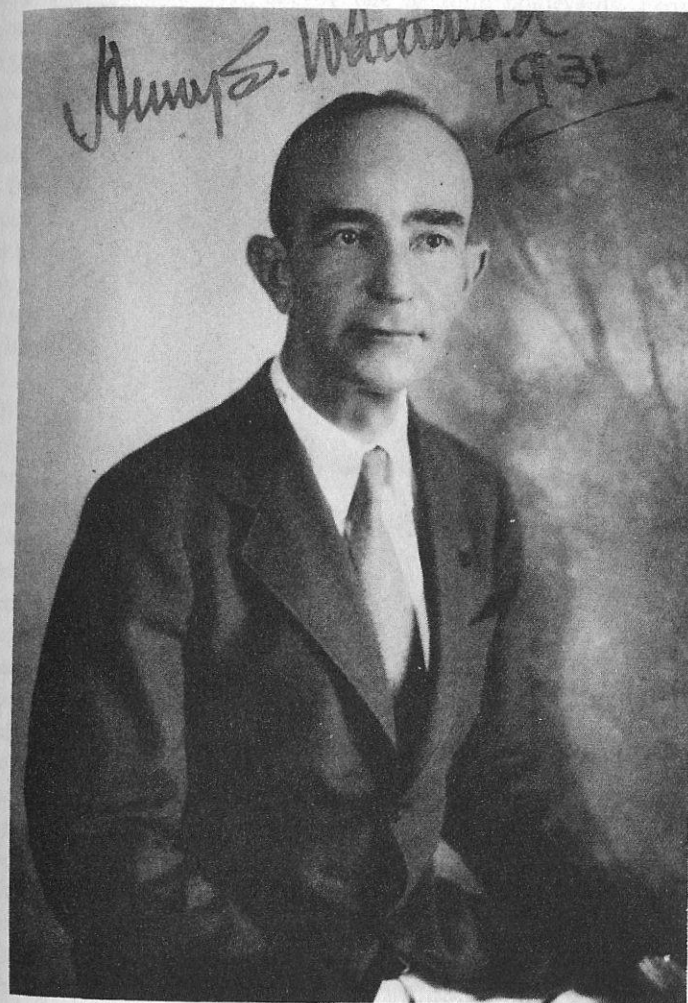
571. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Octr. 13, 1932

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

..... The prime objective of trip #1 was New Orleans, which I wished to see before the destruction of the old French Market. On the way I stopped in N. Y. a week to visit Long, & afterward proceeded south via Washington & the exquisite Shenandoah Valley. From Roanoke, Va., I proceeded westward to Knoxville, Tenn., & thence south through splendid landscapes to Chattanooga. The latter is one of the most fascinating places I have ever seen—with its surrounding mountains & the sinuous windings of the yellow Tennessee River. I went all over Lookout Mountain, & explored the magnificent network of limestone caverns inside it—culminating in the vast & new-discovered chamber called "Solomon's Temple," where a 145-foot waterfall bursts forth from the side—near the roof—and dashes down to a pool whose outlet no man knows. From Chattanooga I proceeded west along the bluff-lined Tennessee, enjoying some of the finest landscapes I ever saw in my life. At Memphis (modern & unpicturesque) I beheld the mighty Mississippi for the first time—witnessing a splendid sunset over it. I then headed south through the alluvial cotton lands of Mississippi—where nothing but flat vistas & nigger cabins are found—finally reaching the Yazoo country & climbing the bluffs to picturesque old Vicksburg, which I like tremendously. Just south of Vicksburg I began to strike typically southern flora—live-oaks & Spanish moss. Natchez—dreaming on its river-bluff—captivated me completely. It is one of those splendid survivals of the past exemplified by Quebec, Portsmouth, Newburyport, Salem, Marblehead, Annapolis, Fredericksburg, & Charleston. Founded in 1716 by the French, & later passing through British & Spanish hands, it came into the U. S. in 1798, & soon afterward became a great cotton port. Between 1800 & 1860 it was built up with a splendid type of classic architecture, nearly all of which survives to this day. The financial ruin attendant upon the

Civil War stopped its growth, hence it remains today a bit of crystallised history. Its landscape setting is as fascinating as its architecture—live-oaks, moss, cypresses, rolling hills, & old roads deeply sunken in the friable yellow soil. Natchez is one of the few places I'd really like to live in. From there I descended straight to New Orleans—not pausing at the largely modernised Baton Rouge. South of Natchez the landscape grows flat & unpicturesque, & palm-like growths begin to appear. Later on the vast embankments & spillways of the levee system come into view, & occasional plantation houses (both of the slant-roofed French type & of the later pillared classic American type) are seen. At last New Orleans comes in sight—a large modern city with the ancient nucleus still surviving & imbedded close to the waterfront. Probably you've read a good deal about New Orleans. I stayed there over two weeks & came to like it immensely. It was founded by the French in 1718, & taken over by the Spaniards (though without any change in language & customs) in 1763. In 1788 a vast fire nearly wiped it out, but it was very solidly rebuilt—in a fashion slightly Spanish because of the aid furnished by government engineers. The American purchase came in 1803, but the Anglo-Saxon influx established itself south of the older city, leaving the former intact. In the course of years all activity & change centred in the newer American section, so that the original Creole city as rebuilt soon after 1788 still stands unchanged—as quaint a spectacle as Charleston or Quebec. It is a rectangle along the water front some 4000 ft. long & 1500 ft. deep, & now receives the name of "Vieux Carré," or "Old French Quarter." The houses are largely of brick & stucco, & have pointed roofs not unlike those of Charleston & Quebec. Wrought-iron grilles & balconies are everywhere present, & the Spanish influence shews itself in the many picturesque patios or courtyards. I spent most of my time in this ancient section, & came to know it very well. Outside toward the south is the modern American city of broad avenues & splendid gardens, & northward is the modern Creole (though English-speaking for the last two generations) district with houses shewing the hereditary French influence. New Orleans has some fine old live-oaks, & a wealth of tall palms. It is so low that only levees & an artificial drainage system can keep it dry—and until recently no cellars could be dug. Burials have to be above ground, & the ancient cemeteries with their tall tombs & thick walls pierced with oven-like vaults are highly picturesque.



Henry S. Whitehead





Robert Bloch

The drainage canals were formerly open ditches, but in latter years they have been covered over one by one to form boulevards. People of American & French descent still predominate in New Orleans, & niggers of every hue are numerous. There is a large Italian population, centreing chiefly in the northerly half of the Vieux Carré. The southerly half of the Quarter, somewhat reclaimed from slumdom, is a sort of mild Greenwich Village with antique shops & artists' studios.

New Orleans was, at the time of my visit, the home of the brilliant weird-taler E. Hoffmann Price; but since I had never been in touch with him I thought I wouldn't butt in & introduce myself. However, it happened that during my sojourn I wrote to Robert E. Howard of Texas—who, noting the hotel address on my stationery & being in epistolary touch with Price, took it upon himself to telegraph Price of my presence & whereabouts. The result was an unexpected telephone call from Price, followed by the longest call I have ever paid—or ever expect to pay—in my life . . . . . a call lasting  $25\frac{1}{2}$  hours without a break, from the middle of a Sunday evening to close upon midnight Monday. Price had a room in the Vieux Carré, & now & then his roommate would brew tea or coffee, or prepare a meal. Once we went over to the old French Market for professionally made coffee. Nobody seemed to get sleepy, & the hours slipped away imperceptibly amidst discussions & fictional criticisms. Later calls lasted 10 hours or so each—and I was in touch with Price until I left. Shortly after my departure Price himself moved out of town—to the quiet little village of Bay St. Louis across the line in Mississippi.\* Price is a remarkable chap—a West-Pointer, war veteran, Arabic student, connoisseur of Oriental rugs, amateur fencing-master, mathematician, dilettante coppersmith & iron worker, chess-champion, pianist, & what not! He is dark, & trim of figure, not very tall, & with a small black moustache. He talks fluently & incessantly, & might be thought a bore by some—although I like to hear him rattling on. Up to last May he was well off—holding an important job with the Prestolite Co.—but the depression finally got him, & he is now depending on fiction for his income. The result is rather bad aesthetically, for he caters painfully to the pulp standard. I fear we shan't see anything more of the quality of *The Stranger from Kurdistan*. Still—he couldn't be as bad as most of the contributors to

\* Just got a note from P.—he's moved back to N. O.

W. T. & its congeners! Just now he is trying to get me to collaborate on a sequel to my *Silver Key*—introducing a dimensional element suggested by his mathematical side. I did not meet the other former New Orleans weird-taler—W. Kirk Mashburn—for he had previously moved to Texas.

Well—after New Orleans I proceeded to quaint old Mobile, which I liked exceedingly. Then up to Montgomery (original Confederate capital) & across to Atlanta. There was nothing in the latter modern city to hold me, so I hastened right on along the western Carolinas to Charlotte & Winston-Salem—and thence through Danville to good old Richmond. I love Richmond despite its fairly extensive modernisation. The landmarks of Poe's boyhood are readily traceable, & the bluff at the foot of Clay St., above old Shockoe Creek (near the White House of the Confederacy) is still unaltered—standing just as it did when little Edgar went swimming at its base. The creek, however, is filled in. As always I visited Maymont Park on the banks of the James—a former private estate exquisitely landscaped & containing the finest Japanese garden in the U. S. After Richmond I paused at Fredericksburg, Annapolis, & Philadelphia—all favourite antiquarian havens of mine—and finally wound up by visiting a friend—Samuel Loveman—in Brooklyn. From this visit I was called home by a telegram announcing an acute attack on the part of my invalid aunt—an attack which terminated fatally on July 3d.

My second trip began Aug. 30 with a visit to W. Paul Cook in Boston. On the 31st we went to Newburyport to see the total solar eclipse, & had a most impressive view of that phenomenon. Two days later I started on a cheap rail excursion to Montreal & Quebec—thus entering the northern part of that New-France of which Louisiana formed the southern part. As perhaps you know, the French of Quebec Province are more retentive of their language & customs than those of Louisiana, so that they insist on an official bi-lingualism. All official signs are in the two languages, so that one comes on things like RAILWAY CROSSING / TRAVERSE DU CHEMIN DE FER or NO PARKING / NE STATIONNEZ PAS at every turning. Montreal (which I had never seen before) is more Anglo-Saxon than Quebec City, & does not seem at all foreign except in the French section east of St. Lawrence Blvd. It must be a great deal like the New Orleans of 75 years ago in its cultural division. Some parts are purely English,

but in the French section all the store & street signs are in French, (as none are in New Orleans). There are really twice as many French as English in the city, though they have lost the real social & commercial dominance. Montreal is a highly attractive place, well set off by the towering slope of Mt. Royal, which rises in its midst. The ancient part—where I spent most of my time—is that closest to the southern waterfront, but it does not compare with the Vieux Carré of New Orleans or with the whole of old Quebec City. Montreal, taken all in all, would seem like any large, high-grade American city but for the profusion of horse-drawn vehicles. I explored it thoroughly, & also visited the adjacent Lachine Rapids—beside which La Salle had his seigniory.

However—I was glad to move along to old Quebec at last, for that is utterly unique among the cities of this continent. As in 1930 I revelled in the atmosphere of massed antiquity—the towering cliff, frowning citadel, silver belfries, tiled red roofs, breath-taking panoramas, winding, precipitous alleys & flights of steps, centuried facades & doorways, venerable stone monasteries, & other picturesque reliquiae of bygone days—and I also took a ferry & 'bus excursion around the neighbouring Isle d'Orleans, where the old French countryside remains in a primitive, unspoiled state—just as when Wolfe & his men landed in 1759. There were endless brick farmhouses with curved eaves, wind & water mills, wayside shrines, & quaint white villages clustering around ancient silver-steepled parish churches. Nothing but French is spoken, & the rustic population live where their ancestors have lived for more than 200 years—seldom visiting even Quebec. I hated to go home, & when re-passing through Boston eased the transition by making a side-trip to ancient Marblehead. Since my return to Prov. I have been kept on the move by two successive guests—first the young poet Carl F. Strauch (now Asst. Librarian of Muhlenberg University) of Allentown, Pa., & then our brilliant W. T. colleague Donald Wandrei. As a result of this social activity on top of my travel orgy, my work & correspondence are hopelessly piled up, so that I don't know when I'll be able to see daylight again. However—I did take a day off last Sunday for a cheap excursion to Boston, which permitted me to get up to Salem & Marblehead again. There won't be many more days warm enough to let me enjoy the outdoors. . . .

\*\*\*\*\*



I was much interested in the dialect notes which you enclosed—& which I return in case you keep a file on such material. Several of the idioms are more than local, though perhaps they are used more frequently in western Pennsylvania than elsewhere. Others, so far as I know, are absolutely local—& utterly new to me. Among the latter are *bealed*, *rosette*, *footy*, *spreads*, *haps*, *hippens*, *flannel cakes*, &c. *Mind for remember* is a Scotticism. *My! but*—is as common in New England as in Pa. So is *peaked* for thin & drawn. The pronunciation of *were* as *wāre* is absolutely correct in old England, & is favoured by many in New. It is a spontaneous survival in northern Maine. *Graveyard* is universal throughout N. E. So is *spare room*. *Happen in* & *set up house-keeping* are also common Novanglianisms. The Pittsburgh *inflections*, however, appear to be purely local. Of late dialect has been studied more than ever before, since radios & talking cinemas threaten to eradicate most localisms. A friend of mine is greatly interested in the speech of the Hudson Valley, & is actually trying to learn the debased South Holland patois called “Jersey Dutch” still spoken by certain decaying backwater elements.

Yr most obt Grandsire—  
HPL

572. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Oct. 20, 1932

Dear Malik:—

About Derleth—I'm going to mail you a copy of *Pagany* with his *Five Alone*—and possibly (that is, if I can find it!) one of the *Midland* with his *Old Ladies*—three-starred by E. J. O'Brien in the *Best Short Stories of 1932*. Keep these as long as you like—though I'd like to see them again eventually. You will see in these things a writer absolutely alien to the facile little hack who grinds out minor *W. T.* junk. There is nothing in common betwixt Derleth A and Derleth B—no point of contact in their mental worlds—and yet one brain houses them both . . . . . artist and business-man, standing back to back and never speaking! The real Derleth's source is in writers like Proust, and other evokers of wistful reminiscence who symbolise universal things in

particular memories. Nearly all the gang agree that the kid will go far in literature—probably farther than any of the rest. All the others—including myself, god damn it, despite my best efforts to keep clear of the taint—are more or less influenced by the cheap and tawdry methods and moods of commercial writing. Derleth can stoop to hack work, and yet keep his real side intact as a sincere artist. I don't see how he does it—but he does. You'll see what I mean when you get the stuff I'm sending. All of which reminds me that I've lately purchased E. J. O'Brien's *Dance of the Machines*—a splendid exposé of the vulgar shallowness, insincerity, and worthlessness of American commercial fiction under the false-standardized conditions of the present. If you haven't read this, and would like to, I'd be glad to lend it to you. Other recent purchases of mine (at an alluring remainder sale) are Huysmans' *A Rebours* and Perutz's *Master of the Day of Judgment*.

As for my *Dreams in the Witch-House*—Derleth didn't say it was *unsalable*; in fact, he rather thought it *would* sell. He said it was a *poor story*, which is an entirely different and much more lamentably important thing. I'm not sure that I wish it to appear before something is done to it. On the other hand, Smith and Wandrei liked it, and Dwyer's opinion was more favourable than otherwise. The best thing to do is to wait a while and see how it strikes me on a fresh reading. I think I need a long fallow period during which to purge my mind of the popular-fiction formula—for I can't carry water on both shoulders as Derleth can. The story before the *Witch-House*—*The Shadow over Innsmouth*—has also been unfavourably received; and all my work, past and present, has recently had a very revealing analysis from a reader whose wide attainments well qualify him to render an opinion. Undeniably, I have allowed the popular forms to infect my work more than I have realised; so that it is always deficient in the subtlety and fineness of mood-drawing which marks anything even approaching real literature. Of course, I have no guarantee that I could write real literature under even the most favourable conditions—but at least I can try to rid myself of conspicuous handicaps. I'm not so much influenced by what I do in a revisory way.

About Randolph Carter—as I said before, I hope you're in no hurry, because the thing must be done under reposeful conditions if at all. I may flop miserably—but if I feel myself flopping too badly I'll send the whole works on to Klarkash-Ton, High-Priest of Tsathoggua, and

see what a third hand can do. What I'll send you first (god help you, my son!) will not be a carbon but a vilely scrawled rough draught in my worse-than-Amharic cursive (and cursed!) script—because I hate typing too damn badly to do it for nothing. There'll be no typing for Grandpa till the whole thing is settled. Just one session—no more!

Yr. obeisant slave—

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573. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

October 25, 1932

Jonckheer:—

..... Thanks for the set of proofreading symbols—which I am filing in my professional department beside the other card you so kindly sent. Wish I could get a chance to turn proofreading to financial advantage! ..

Yr. obt. Grandpa

574. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Theobald Grange—  
Oct. 27, 1932

Son:—

..... Do you attempt to account for the magnitude of the present depression? In surveying the effects of mechanis'd industry upon society, I have been led to a certain change of political views. Formerly I favour'd the concentration of resources in a few hands, in the interest of a stable hereditary culture; but I now believe that this system will no longer operate. With the universal use and improvement of machinery, all the needed labour of the world can be perform'd by a relatively few persons, leaving vast numbers permanently unemployable, depression or no depression. If these people are not fed and amused, they will dangerously revolt; hence we must either institute a programme of steady pensioning—panem et circenses—or else subject

industry to a governmental supervision which will lessen its profits but spread its jobs amongst more men working less hours. For many reasons the latter course seems to me most reasonable—especially since the vast accumulations of the commercial oligarchs are not now used to any great extent for cultural purposes. Therefore (deeming both democracy and communism fallacious for western civilisation) I favour a kind of fascism which may, whilst helping the dangerous masses at the expense of the needlessly rich, nevertheless preserve the essentials of traditional civilisation and leave political power in the hands of a small and cultivated (though not over-rich) governing class largely hereditary but subject to gradual increase as other individuals rise to its cultural level. ....

Best of wishes—Yr. most obt. Grandpa.

575. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Octr. 27, 1932

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

No, I don't think I was too favourable toward *The Tin Roof*. I didn't mean to imply that you had produced something literally equal to Norris's *McTeague*, but simply that you had mastered the art of calling up the peculiar sort of environment handled in that novel—the deadly greyish-brown sort of decay which is peculiarly devoid of all beauty, & which has not even the nightmare picturesqueness & tragic dignity or drama of absolute gutter life. The most significant thing about it is its complete difference from anything else of yours. The improvement is startling & radical, & argues such a felicitous finding of yourself that one may well be pardoned a somewhat demonstrative amount of enthusiasm. I spoke relatively—but see no reason to take back any statement made. Probably Derleth could parallel the job—but then, he's been doing this kind of thing for three years or more, & had a general literary training long before that. No—this piece is a landmark for you, & I believe you'll later look back on it as such. Probably your forte will be the realistic rather than the fantastic—which is all in your favour, since unreality is at best a minor, limited



specialty without many opportunities for expansion. As for the relative ease of realism & phantasy—that's all in the individual. For me, it would be very difficult to think up or observe enough details of real life to fill a narrative, whereas it is easy to devise imaginative vistas & supply touches of cosmic atmosphere. With others—perhaps with you—it is just the other way around. Each to his specialty—though of course it takes a great deal of experimenting in various fields to discover what one's specialty is. Wandrei is beginning to experiment in realism, & tells me that he is at work on a reminiscent novel in something like the Derleth vein. I was greatly interested in your account of the sources of *The Tin Roof*, & congratulate you on your ability to observe & store up such a wealth of significant detail. Don't mind the essentially photographic nature of your early products. Style, situation, cosmic intimations, & all that will come later on as a natural development. Derleth's style was rotten up to two or three years ago—loose, careless, unrhythmical, & even of doubtful grammar—but since then he has trained it into something really fine, with precision, vividness, & a subtly musical rhythm.

As for myself—no, I couldn't turn out work like that. Whenever I assemble realistic detail it is with great effort—& more important still, I simply haven't anything to say in any field outside the unreal. I have not a keen sensitiveness for the drama of actual life. Academically I appreciate its importance & I can admire the artistic skill which captures & utilises it; but it does not interest me enough to make me want to get it down on paper myself. There can be no real authorship without a genuine & imperative urge for expression—& I have not that urge except in connexion with the haunting conception of impinging cosmic mystery & the liberation implied in the suspension or circumvention of the tyranny of time, space, & natural law. Writing—or rather, trying to write—in some other vein would be an absurd & unmotivated procedure. I shall keep silent a while, & if I begin again shall not shew the results to anyone. Unfavourable criticism, while it does not anger me, has an adverse effect on my creative ability. I must write freely if at all—to suit myself, & with no thought of any audience.

Yes—social or settlement work, like that of your sister, would surely give you a valuable insight into the workings of human nature in the raw. Possibly you can get cases from her, like the one you mention, to work up literarily. I fancy that much matter of this sort must exist

in the records of settlement workers, & the published reports of charitable institutions & sociological commissions, if you could only get access to such. In looking over *The N. Y. Times'* list of 100 *Neediest Cases* each Christmas I have often thought what splendid material some of these brief & tragic sketches would make for an author gifted enough to use them. Derleth digs up a great deal of his information about family relationships, histories, & tragedies through systematic absorption of village gossip & actual prying into the affairs of his neighbours. He frankly admits that Sauk City people consider him an utter pest & nuisance. I fear that no one can be a genuinely great realist without doing an obnoxious amount of nosing & gossiping. This sort of thing is instinctively repulsive & abhorrent to me; though I can, objectively speaking, excuse it in a serious artist whose sole motive is an honest curiosity about life as a whole & a genuine creative desire to capture the texture of life in lasting words. Here's wishing you luck with your attempted suicide story. I wouldn't mind seeing it when it's done.

As for dialect—I have never heard either "comfort" or "comfortable" used in connexion with bedclothes, though in N. E. the word *comforter* (note the exact form) is applied to a very heavy quilt, thickly stuffed with cotton. In Great Britain (—& also here, despite the conflicting usage involved) the same word is used to describe a heavy outdoor muffler for the throat & chest. A great deal of the homely local slang of yesteryear is perishing everywhere in this generation, despite the attempts of antiquarians & traditionalists to keep it alive. On the other hand, there is a tendency for certain other localisms to spread alarmingly & become a part of the nation-wide *eloquium vulgare*. An example is the use of *like* for *as* or *as if*, once peculiar to the less educated classes of the South. (*It looked LAHK he was go'n' to call awn you-all.*) This form of speech first rose upward in the social & cultural scale in its native South, & then spread into the Middle West. I think it entered Ohio & such states about 30 years ago or more. Up to the time of the Great War it was still unknown in New England except as either conventional southern dialect or the speech of illiterates. Meanwhile, however, it had conquered the west, entered New York, & secured a hold on the cheaper grade of syndicate writers. This cheap use in printed matter, plus the effect of the radio & talking cinema, has now definitely introduced the solecism into the common speech of New England's lower middle class, & is beginning to affect the careless

Babbitt fringe of the upper middle class. It will never conquer our most careful academic circles, however. In the west one now finds it in the casual speech & writings of even university instructors. Other cases of modern degeneration have to do with corrupt pronunciations. I have seen *add'ress* (for *address*) rise from a frank barbarism to a sort of left-handed recognition in the *Standard Dictionary*. About 1912 I began to notice the lower classes saying *keu'-pon* when they meant *coupon*, & I see that in New York this is more prevalent than in New England. It is still confined to a very common element here. The latest of all popular corruptions—which I never heard till 1924 or 1925 (in N. Y.), & which did not invade New England till about 1930, is the mispronunciation of *căr'-a-mel* as *căr'mel*—a dissyllable identical with *Mt. Carmel*! I have reason to suspect that it has been a westernism for some time—for although it is still an emphatic plebeianism here, it was used in all unconsciousness last month by no less cultivated a youth than Donald Wandrei—of St. Paul, Minn. A less explicable & less excusable sort of corruption is that which arises in upper circles & proceeds from fashionable affectation. The chief case I can recall is that of the pronunciation *pro-grum* for *programme*, which sprang up about 1915. This may have been due to an attempt to ape certain phases of the extreme Oxford accent, but more probably it was a corruption of insidious *visual* origin, resulting from the silly & unjustified popularity of the corrupt spelling of *programme* as *program* in the less conservative American periodicals. Now, unfortunately, this corruption has spread to some quite conservative papers. I have always maintained that the arbitrary corruptions of spelling popular in the United States will ultimately have a disastrous effect even on pronunciation. In the less cultivated parts of the Middle West—say Iowa & Nebraska—(where this cheap faddism reaches its maximum) one occasionally finds forms as absurd as *thot* & *brot* for *thought* & *brought*; & I'll wager that within a generation (unless counteracted by radio & sound cinema) the younger people there will be pronouncing these words to rhyme with *shot* & *blot*, which the ridiculous misspelling unmistakably suggests.

As for the current decline in prose style—it has really been going on for over half a century. Even back in my day the teaching of rhetoric was by no means as exact as it had been in the day of my parents & grandparents, & my early writings were constantly picked

to pieces by my more rigidly trained uncle & grandfather. If my prose has any merit, it is due to that criticism, & to the ancient books of rhetoric (1797, 1812, 1818, 1842, 1845, &c.) in the family library, which I studied assiduously as part of my ingrained antiquarianism. In reality, my writing reflects not the standards of my own chronological period, but those of a century & more ago. For real, honest training you can't beat Blair's *Rhetorick* (of which I have a late—1820—edition), Alden's *Reader* (1797), or Parker's *Aid to Composition* (1845). The latter—redolent of the scholarship of the Poe period—is what I really grew up on. If I had depended on the weak-kneed stuff dished out to me in the early 1900's, I would have a damned sight worse style than I do now . . . . although even as late as that things weren't as slipshod as they are today. I first realised the ineptitude of 20th century pedagogy when a member of the United Amateur Press Assn. back in 1914 & 1915. I was appointed to the critical department, & had occasion to handle the aspiring attempts not only of high-school & college fledglings, but of many teachers & principals. (It would surprise you to see some of the creative yearnings of the genus *praeceptor*!) God, what crap! The blunders that even high-school principals, bearing (tho' gawd knows how) ostentatious A.M.'s & Ph.D.'s, managed to pull! But all teachers aren't like that. My friend M. W. Moe of Milwaukee is an admirably thorough, intelligent, conscientious, & scientific pedagogue, & succeeds in giving most of his pupils a real appreciation of literature & a real ability to write at least reasonably well. One reason why modern pedagogy lays less stress on good writing is that it wishes to concentrate on the more important subject of literary appreciation. This is a sound principle as far as it goes—but I think it would do no harm to insist on good writing as well as appreciation. By the way—I still serve on critical boards in amateur journalism, although my old United has long ago gone down to oblivion. I now belong to the still older National Assn.—recruiting matter of which I believe I sent you last year. Here's a brochure of my criticism which you needn't bother to return. I handle only verse this year.

Yr most obt Grandsire  
Ech-Pi-El



576. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Windowless Tower of Ilat on the Slope of Yoonai,  
Hour of the Wave from Outside and the Humming  
Within.

October 28, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

...

The total neglect of extra-human and extra-mundane things in literature certainly argues a tremendous lack somewhere; and I feel sure that macrocosmic themes cannot permanently be excluded from consideration, even though they are never likely to form a major part of literary expression. The one sound point in Edkins' argument is that the speculative or supernatural tale must, to be effective, have a greater subtlety than most specimens of the past have had. Indeed, we can see a steady increase in subtlety even now—compare *The Castle of Otranto* or even *Melmoth* with *The Willows* or *The White People*! ..

Thine in the brotherhood of the Amorphous Entity,  
E'ch-Pi-El.

577. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Oct. 28, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... No—Cook could not accompany me on the Canadian trip. Possibly it was just as well that I was alone, since my rate of travel usually proves exhausting to those less moved with exploratory enthusiasm than myself. To save time & hotel bills I travel by night whenever I can—and on this occasion cut out two successive nights of rest, spending them on trains.

..... About eyes—muscular trouble often mends

considerably, as mine did in the winter of 1916-17. My eyesight was very bad & jumpy—everything would go black & indistinct now & then—and I had some new glasses (my present ones, which I wear very rarely for middle-distance vision or in theatres or at illustrated lectures) which I had to wear constantly except for close-range reading. As time passed, I needed them less & less; & in the winter of 1925-6 I left them off for general vision. Some two years ago I had returning tugs at the left eye—my worst one always—but my long stay in Florida in 1931 seemed to cure the trouble. I don't yet know whether I'll ever have to return to glasses for constant use.

As for radios—I doubt if I shall ever get one, but of course one can often obtain entertaining material over them. My aunt in Slater Ave. has one now, & I sometimes "fish" for distant stations when over there—for there is a fascination in the uncanny bridging of space.

.....  
The outdoor season is about over for me, though I did take one final excursion to Salem & Marblehead Oct. 9—a splendidly warm day, with autumn colour beginning to appear in the foliage. Both old towns exerted their usual fascination, & only the coming of darkness drove me home. ....

About the Harris Collection of Poetry at Brown—it's really no honour to be in it. It includes everything indiscriminately—good & bad—for purposes of historic record. Among the contents are the pathetic brochures of some of my very 'dumbest' revision-clients—including that immortal itinerant lecturer David V. Bush. ....

With best wishes—

Sincerely yrs HPLovecraft

578. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Oct. 29, 1932

Dear A. W.:—

I have digested *Farway House* with the utmost pleasure and appreciation, and believe it fully sustains the high standards of the d'Erlette

tradition. Your eye for setting, atmosphere, mannerism, and character is an enviable one, and these serious products of yours certainly indicate that you are on the road toward a genuine place in literature. It is hard to pick flaws with so excellent a performance, and anything I could say would be of the most minor sort. I might suggest that the coincidence of the doctor's arrival at the exact moment of Mrs. Bord's fatal accident is a little too extraordinary to be passed off by the suggestion of supernaturalism given—although such coincidences certainly have occurred. The only question is whether or not it is too typical for fictional effectiveness. Lesser comments might concern the dialect. You have Thorne, a former college instructor, use *like* ungrammatically at least once, and also put a curious and foreign-sounding phrase—"You must go back to the house, *not so?*"—into the mouth of the doctor, whose first name of *Jasper* plainly indicates Anglo-Saxon origin. Also—it is hard to associate the Roman Catholic religion with a presumably Anglo-Saxon family using such given names as *Phineas* and *Abner*. These names are so overwhelmingly characteristic of the Protestant-dissenting old-American stock that their presence in a Romish family seems incongruous. Whether such an anomaly developed on Wisconsin soil you know better than I, but unless you have historical warrant for the combination, you had better change either the names or the denomination. If the Farways are supposed to be of New England stock, they must be Protestants; for Catholicism was unknown and abhorred among New Englanders up to a period long after the settlement of the West. If, on the other hand, they are a Maryland family (except in Maryland, Anglo-Saxon Catholics were almost non-existent in America up to a generation or so ago, though there were perhaps a few in New York) or a family of non-English origin (Irish Catholic families might bear the name of Farway) they would be extremely unlikely to give any such names as Phineas or Abner. In later generations the blending of different stocks and traditions might well give rise to apparently contradictory appellations, but Phineas is so old (an aged man even in the day of the horse and buggy) that he would necessarily go back to something like the pioneer generation. However—as I said before, these are minor, incidental points. The story itself is really splendid—vivid, convincing, and full of a certain brooding inevitability which forms the essence of real tragedy. I certainly hope this tale will land in a suitable medium. It has the real stuff in it,

and I don't know of anyone else in the group who could have written so effective a thing. ....

Yr. obt. Grandsire,  
HP

579. TO AUGUST DERLETH

(n.d., early November, 1932)

Dear A. W.:—

.....  
... Coincidences do indeed occur; but it is so seldom that anything of any importance happens to hinge on them, that they cannot be considered as sufficiently typical for general artistic use. Whenever we meet with one in fiction it strikes us as unnatural—and of course the chances are in such a case that it has been dragged arbitrarily in by the author as a short-cut to a neat and vivid theatrical situation. The *realistic* use of coincidence would have to be confined to one or two instances of minor importance in the course of a long sweep of time—and even these instances ought not to involve any very vital consequences. The only two cases where a coincidence of vital consequences would be in order would be (a) a frankly strange story in which the coincidence itself, created as a wonder, might form the central theme, and (b) a saga with a wide canvas, covering many generations, in the course of which a single vitally resulting coincidence might not seem so conspicuously out of place. ...

Best wishes—yr. obt. Grandsire,  
HP

580. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
Nov. 7, 1932.

Dear R. E. H.:—

Your intensely interesting letter duly arrived, and I have digested it with the usual pleasure and appreciation. Let me say at the outset that



there was no need of regretting anything in your former letter, since I never take offence at any genuine effort to wrest the truth or deduce a rational set of values from the confused phenomena of the external world. It never occurs to me to look for personal factors in the age-long battle for truth. I assume that all hands are really trying to achieve the same main object—the discovery of sound facts and the rejection of fallacies—and it strikes me as only a minor matter that different strivers may happen to see a different perspective now and then. And in matters of mere preference, as distinguished from those involving the question of truth versus fallacy, I do not see any ground whatever for acrimonious feeling. Knowing the capriciousness and complexity of the various biological and psychological factors determining likes, dislikes, interests, indifferences, and so on, one can only be astonished that any two persons have even approximately similar tastes. To resent another's different likes and interests is the summit of illogical absurdity. It is very easy to distinguish a sincere, impersonal difference of opinion and tastes from the arbitrary, ill-motivated, and irrational belittlement which springs from a hostile desire to push another down and which constitutes real offensiveness. I have no tolerance for such real offensiveness—but I greatly enjoy debating questions of truth and value with persons as sincere and devoid of malice as I am. Such debate is really a highly valuable—almost indispensable—ingredient of life; because it enables us to test our own opinions and amend them if we find them in any way erroneous or unjustified. One who never debates lacks a valuable chart or compass in his voyage for truth—for he is likely to cherish many false opinions along with sound ones for want of an opportunity to see each opinion viewed from every possible angle. I have modified many opinions of mine in the course of debate, and have been intensely grateful for the chance of so doing.

..... As for sea-food—it is simply *intensely repulsive* to me. If I could get it down without tasting it, I don't imagine it would disagree especially with my stomach—but the taste or smell of it revolts me to the point of nausea and (if too intense or prolonged) actual regurgitation. I know that this aversion is not widely shared, and likewise realise how avidly most inland dwellers take to fish. Visitors to Providence from the west always ask to be taken to shore dining places where clambakes are featured, or restaurants featuring oysters, lobsters,

swordfish, or other alleged delicacies of the sea—indeed, Rhode Island is almost as famous as Louisiana for sea-food. But all this doesn't mean anything to my palate. From earliest infancy every sort of fish, mollusc, or crustacean has been like an emetic to me. My room at 10 Barnes is a former dining room, so that my dressing-alcove (a former pantry with running water) connects with the kitchen by means of a dish-passing aperture now closed but permeable by strong cooking odours. Whenever fish is cooked, I am in misery—and I sometimes get a headache in winter when I can't keep the smell thoroughly aired out. But thank Odin it doesn't happen very often! Aside from sea-food, my principal dietary aversions are tripe, liver, sauerkraut, spinach, any *underdone* meat, any dessert with caraway seed, custards, and (as I've said before) alcoholic liquor or anything with its flavour. At the other end of the scale, my three favourite dietary articles are *cheese*, (preferably of the common hard variety, medium strength. I hate Roquefort, dislike cottage cheese, just tolerate Camembert and Brie, and am neutral about Limburger—which latter I've tasted only once, at Whitehead's a year ago last spring) *chocolate*, (in nearly any form—cake, frosting, sweet milk chocolate, etc.) and *ice cream* (preferably vanilla or coffee—the latter being a popular New England flavour, though largely unknown elsewhere). Quite a triad! I like meat courses very highly seasoned—the Latin idea—and desserts very sweet. Don't care for tea (but take it with lemon if at all) but like coffee—taking both very sweet (about 5 lumps to an average cup). Coffee with little milk—but always some. Don't like milk to drink. Of meats, I fancy I rather prefer beef for all-around consumption, but like most others pretty well. Fond of sausage—especially the old fashioned baked or fried sort. Like fowl—but white meat only. Can't bear dark meat. My really favourite meal is the regular old New England turkey dinner, with highly seasoned dressing, cranberry sauce, onions, etc., and mince pie for dessert. Pie is my favourite dessert, and blueberry (for summer) and mince (for winter) are my preferred kinds—with apple as a good all-year-round third. Like to take vanilla ice cream with apple and blueberry pie. Fond of most fruit, anyway—peaches, pears, strawberries, apricots, bananas. Like Italian cooking very much—especially spaghetti with meat-and-tomato sauce, utterly engulfed in a snowbank of grated Parmesan cheese. Spanish cooking pretty fair, but not up to Italian. Like tamales and chili con carne. Am fond of stuffed green peppers

with tomato sauce . . . in general, I doubt if the buzzards will stage much of a fight over my mortal remains when I explore the west and get dropped by some rampageous two-gun desperado! I'm not, however, a heavy eater—take only 2 meals per day, since my digestion raises hell if I try to eat oftener than once in 7 hours. In winter, when it's too cold for me to go out much, I subsist largely on canned stuff. I always get my own breakfasts, anyway—doughnuts and cheese. I have financial economy in eating worked out to a fine art, and know the self-service lunch rooms where I can get the best bargains. I never spend more than \$3.00 per week on food, and often not even nearly that. In New Orleans I patronised Thompson's (in St. Charles St. near Canal), the Cluck chain, and a cheap place next Lafayette Park called the "Choctaw", which changed its name to the "Palm" during my sojourn. All these lay between the Vieux Carré and my hotel, (where I got an inside room and bath for a dollar a day) which was in St. Charles about half way out to Lee Circle and the public library. Ah, me—I wish I were back in New Orleans (or better still, Florida) for the winter!

.....  
 . . . . . We cannot, in view of what the cultural capacity of mankind has been shown to be, afford to base a civilisation on the low cultural standards of an undeveloped majority. Such a civilisation of mere working, eating, drinking, breeding, and vacantly loafing or childish playing isn't worth maintaining. None of the members of it are really better off than as if they didn't exist at all, and those who are either exceptionally sensitive or exceptionally superior—or both—are infinitely worse off than as if they didn't exist. To be more specific, the process of being alive and conscious is too intrinsically painful—too predominantly painful, after all allowances for natural pleasure are made—to make it worth enduring by any man who has lost the primitive zests of savagery, unless he has a chance of enlarging his grasp on life by a mental and aesthetic development much greater than that of the undeveloped majority. No settled, civilised group has any reason to exist unless it can develop a decently high degree of intellectual and artistic cultivation. The more who can share in this cultivation the better, but we must not invidiously hinder its growth merely because the number of sharers has to be relatively small at first, and because it can perhaps never (Russian claims to the contrary notwithstanding) include

every individual in the whole group. Even at the cost of a little limitation of privilege here and there, we must give the real natural capacities of the best of the group a chance to show what they can do toward dispelling the horror and the weariness of the undeveloped consciousness. But remember that this isn't blindly subscribing to any traditional aristocratic or plutocratic system. What is needed is simply a system which will enable at least some persons—as many as possible—to develop their potentialities to enough of an extent to make life worth living, and which will sustain an environment (economic, civic, educational, architectural, social) in which such developed personalities can function with a minimum of pain and disharmony. This doesn't mean restriction of privilege to the eldest sons of certain persons or to the possessors of so many millions of dollars, but merely the modelling of general institutions to facilitate the development of those capable of achieving it, and to make the prevailing conditions congenial to developed persons. If at times the circumstances of birth, or the chance possession of faculties and opportunities giving command of extra financial resources, may give one person a somewhat better prospect of development than another may have, we need not become fearful (as the Russian bolsheviks are) that this will necessarily lead to the reestablishment of a narrow aristocracy or plutocracy. Only irrational envy could possibly find anything to resent in individual cases of special opportunity, so long as a sincere effort is maintained to keep the general road of advancement open, and to uphold a dominant standard of intrinsic personal development rather than one of birth or money. A man of sense is content to put up with occasional inevitable bendings and lapses of a dominant ideal, so long as the general reign of the ideal is not seriously threatened. Often a fanatical attempt to abolish the defects results in a general chaos amidst which the whole ideal is lost.

And so, as I have said, my ideal of a government fitted to the machine age is a fascistic one, with certain basic points so firmly embedded in its essential ideology that no laxity or latitude of administration could wholly nullify their operative force. Such points would include the government's control of industry in a manner designed to spread work and reward it adequately, and to eliminate the profit motive as much as possible in favour of the demand-supplying motive—a control probably amounting to ownership in the case of the largest industries—plus



a system of pensions and benefits for the unemployed and unemployable. It would likewise include adequate public education both for industry and for the increased leisure of a mechanised era—an education not merely utilitarian, but liberal enough to develop the citizen's capacity for savouring life on a decently cultivated plane, so that his leisure will be that of a civilised person rather than that of a cinema-haunting, dance-hall frequenting, poolroom-loafing clod. No curb would be placed on private education, individual specialisation, or the establishment of higher and higher cultural standards on the part of persons and groups, in any case where such could be effected without upsetting the general economic equilibrium. There would be no place for the bolshevik's savage persecution of the liberal arts which he hates and calls "bourgeois", or for his callous discouragement of all the pure intellectual and aesthetic effort which aims not at the serving of material wants, but at the satisfaction of the profoundest innate and abstract elements of the human spirit. In the conduct of such a government I certainly think that a highly restricted franchise and office-holding eligibility would be absolutely essential—and I do not think it would be greatly resented if restriction followed logical and impartial lines for reasons well known to all. The idea that untrained persons can possibly understand the least thing about practical civil administration in an economically complex machine civilisation involving the most intricate engineering problems (a civilisation thrust on us by the blind historic flux, which we must accept whether we like it or not) is so grotesque and absurd that only blind custom based on a traditional and ineffable group stupidity can conceivably cause any sober adult to entertain it seriously in the disillusioned year of 1932. Democracy—as distinguished from universal opportunity and good treatment—is today a fallacy and impossibility so great that any serious attempt to apply it cannot be considered as other than a mockery and a jest. In primitive times the average man was more or less able to understand the nature of the governmental problems around him—understand, that is, what immediate measures would best effect his wishes in the long run, and what practical steps would, through a relatively simple chain of cause and effect, be able to ensure the successful adoption and maintenance of such measures. In the involved world of today no such comprehension is possible. Under the highly technicalised government which any large industrial nation must have, the citizen of only average informa-

tion and intelligence can possess only the faintest idea of what the very simplest political principles mean, while he has not the remotest chance of grasping anything whatever about the more advanced and intricate problems of policy and administration. This applies, moreover, not only to the simple and uncultivated man, but to all economic and technical laymen, whether they be ploughmen or Sanskrit professors, street-sweepers or sculptors. For such uninformed persons to cast votes determining national measures, or even to fancy that they can guess what most of such measures are about, is a subject for uproarious cosmic laughter. And for such persons to be eligible for administrative office is something at which Tsathoggua and Yog-Sothoth must virtually split their sides in unrestrained and convulsive hilarity! Government "by popular vote" means merely the nomination of doubtfully qualified men by doubtfully authorised and seldom competent cliques of professional politicians representing hidden interests, followed by a sardonic farce of emotional persuasion in which the orators with the glibest tongues and flashiest catch-words herd on their side a numerical majority of blindly impressionable dolts and gulls who have for the most part no idea of what the whole circus is about. The sacred common peepul indulge their sovereign democratic right to exercise the franchise in the control of their great commonwealth—and are saddled with a set of rulers whom they didn't really choose, and about whose real capacities and policies they know absolutely nothing . . . and couldn't understand if they were told. And that goes for economically and administratively untrained poets, teachers, and artists as well as for garage helpers and plumbers' apprentices. A rational fascist government would have to change all that. Both office-holding and voting ought to be confined to such persons as can pass a really serious and practical examination in economics, history, sociology, business administration, and other subjects needed for the genuine comprehension of modern governmental problems. No one unable to pass such an examination—not the bluest-blooded boaster of sixteen heraldic quarterings, the richest millionaire manufacturer, or the profoundest mathematician or scientist, any more than the stupidest elevator-boy or furnace-cleaner—ought to have the least share in administering the affairs of the nation. But of course it would be the universally understood duty of the public (and free) educational system to give everyone (aside, perhaps, from the members of certain alien race-stocks whose

heritage makes them unsuitable factors in the management of a nation of the given race-stock) an equal opportunity to qualify for the civic franchise. Nothing but a lack of inclination to specialise in this direction, or a mental capacity not above the average, would prevent any citizen from becoming a voter and potential office-holder. . . . .

I trust you can pardon my occasional expression of sincere opinions which differ from your own. As a matter of fact, all my favourite major correspondents are persons with whom I differ on some subject or another—usually many subjects—so that my long letters always tend to fall more or less into the debate class. Just now—or rather, after I get some less agreeable work done—I'm preparing to demolish the critical position of a chap who despises weird literature and exalts smart sophistication—and after that I shall tackle a fellow who retains a more or less sheepish belief in the occult. Hammering toward truth amidst a chaos of conflicting opinions is something which has always seemed to me especially fascinating.

. . . . .

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
HPL

581. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Novr. 16, 1932—  
5 a. m.

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

. . . . . Good luck with your suicide tale—you certainly have enough dark elements to contend with! As your powers grow, you will probably experiment more & more in material where not so much dependence is placed upon tragic intensity or abnormality of situation, but where the flow & colour of life are subtly suggested through more externally commonplace events. Only wide testing can shew you in the end what sort of themes you are best fitted for. As for sources—no, I don't think you'd be very good at that personal

nosing which the young Comte d'Erlette seems to practice so successfully. I know I couldn't do anything even remotely like that—to begin with, a whole set of inhibitions against offensiveness, encroachment, & cheap curiosity would stand in the way; & I fear the artist in me isn't sufficient to undermine what I have been accustomed from infancy to regard as the very foundations of good breeding. Long & I have often tried to settle the question as to whether one may at the same time be a successful realist & a gentleman, & our conclusions have generally tended toward the negative side. A truly great realist must have a prodigious amount of accurate first-hand knowledge of exactly what happens among groups of people—exactly what motives operate, how they operate, & how every type of emotion expresses itself in human action . . . . . also, just how the feelings & character of each type of individual develop through the years—& so on & so on . . . . . We can't see how any such body of direct information—the enormous fund of human information possessed by Dreiser & Sherwood Anderson—can possibly be accumulated without a long & persistent career of obnoxious peeping, prying, & general violation of personal reticences. How, otherwise, can these birds know exactly how all sorts of persons react to all sorts of situations? No—I don't think that first-hand settlement work would agree with you very well. Besides—it would give you data on only one side of life—the raw side. It is possible for an author to get rather warped through a perspective ample in one narrow direction but restricted in others. Reporting would afford more all-around opportunities, but as you say, is hardly the ideal career for a retiring person. I know I wouldn't last a day at such a job! . . . . .

As for poetry—you don't know yet whether it will form a natural medium of expression for you. Give yourself time! You don't have to like all the standard poets. Their methods & moods are very different, & it is perfectly possible to enjoy & appreciate some of them keenly while remaining indifferent to others. I share several of the dislikes you enumerate—especially Burns & Browning. The latter, to my mind, kept close to the spirit of prose—amply justifying the famous Wilde epigram—*Meredith is a prose Browning*—& SO WAS BROWNING. I don't run any temperature over Byron myself. Of Swinburne I like the earlier things, though of course he babbled himself out in repetition. Tennyson has some fine effects, but as a whole he wearies me. You are dead right in exalting Keats & Shelley. They represent the absolute



zenith of the poetic art. Of moderns, Millay is an excellent minor, & Masters is powerful whether you call him poetry or prose. Robert Frost is the real stuff, & Masfield is not to be dismissed with a gesture. But W. B. Yeats is probably the greatest living poet. ....

No—the “depression plant” is a new one on me! It surely sounds picturesque enough—possibly it is a local Pittsburgh idea. And speaking of localisms—here is something I saw in the *Literary Digest* which I never knew about before. How would you like to get bashed on the bean with an *espantoon*? In recent years I have heard the term *night-stick* used—quite irrespective of the sun or clock. Another one-city localism is the New Orleans term for sidewalk—*banquette*. This is peculiar to the town, & although of French Creole origin is not met with anywhere else or in any French dictionary. Curious that *cân'mel* for *câr'-a-mel* should have had so great a headway. I certainly don't recall hearing it around here till a couple of years ago, though I found it in N. Y. City in the early 1920's. Evidently it originated in the west & is spreading eastward. During the war at least three curious orthoëpic perversions attracted my notice—*en'-sîn* for *en'-sîgn*, *râ'-tions* for *râ'-tions*, & *can-tôn'-ment* for *can'-ton-ment*. I haven't kept track of the fate of these forms. One word which may—through usage—be actually changing its accent is *pri'-ma-ri-ly*. More & more the careless form *pri-mar'-i-ly* is heard.

Yr most obt hble Servt  
E'ch-Pi-El

582. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Subterrene Mosque of Eblis  
Night of the Darting Flames  
Nov. 18, 1932

Dear Malik:—

As for the youthful Auguste-Guillaume, Comte d'Erlette—I thought *Old Ladies* and *Five Alone* would give you a new slant on the kid! In merit the two seem to me about equivalent—for, as you'll recall, I am not very enthusiastic about the plot or story element in a piece of writing. What I want is *substance*—the colour of life. As you see,

O'Brien likes these things so well that he has three-starred both. I don't think the non-escape of the rebellious daughter is at all unlife-like. People do get bound and paralysed like that—helpless in the face of a family feeling which overshadows everything else. One sees it often amongst the ancient New England stock. It is, of course, lamentably unwholesome, and we may thank the modern age for removing much of the basis of this type of psychosis. As to further Derlethiana—if you're game to pay the postage on some 190 pages of thin onion-skin second sheets, I'll send you (for later return to Derleth) the kid's real masterpiece—*Evening in Spring*—when he sends me the new and revised version he is just finishing. If that isn't a real work of art I'll never utter a critical opinion again! As for the financial side—*Pagany*, *The Midland*, and other high-grade experimental magazines of this type do not pay for contributions at all. It is a matter of art, not of business. Their standards are very high, and Derleth bombarded them for six years before they would accept anything of his. Look at the tables of contents and see the type of author that contributes. Derleth's *business* is writing cheap junk for *W. T.* and the pulp detective magazines, plus working in a canning factory at odd seasons. That is one thing. His *literary* work—the effort of a sensitive personality to live fully and satisfyingly through adequate and finely-modelled self-expression—is something altogether different. One's *business* is only a disagreeable means to an end. Disinterested self-expression is *life itself*—the thing in order to enjoy while we undergo the loathsome process of commercial endeavour. It is an end in itself—not a means toward anything else. If we're paid for it, that's just so much “velvet”, as the Babbitts say.

I note your reasoning on the subject of the revision of stories already accepted, but can't quite concur with all its points. The wish to change a tale which an editor has approved is by no means a reflection on his judgment. The tale, as taken, was good—but there may be a way of making it still better. The editor would, we may assume, have himself thought the new version better if he had seen it. In sending it you could make that point quite clear—confidently expecting the editor to like the new version still more than he liked the original fairly-good version. Surely it is a generally recognised thing that there are degrees of merit among soundly meritorious items. As for the all-rights business—I dare say you know best about that. I'm no businessman—in fact, I

am conspicuously lacking in all that pertains to the commercial mood and psychology.

Beatitudes of Yog-Sothoth upon thee!

T, E, E, b, 4, 7, 5, E, 2, 4, 4, 7, E, 1, 4

583. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Nov. 26, 1932

Dear Malik:—

Allah reward thee, Delight of the Prophet and Protector of the Poor! May the Peris of Paradise be kind to one who spares an old man the pains of toil at the Eblis-Engine of Franquistan! May all thine ancestors feast with the Preadamite Sultans, and may all thy sons become the Caliphs of opulent empires beyond the East! Well—in a way I shan't mind the appearance of the *Picture*, for that is the first tale to mention the name of *Arkham*, to which I have since referred so often. Architectural note: if anywhere in the description of the old house you come upon the word fanlight, please change it to transom. Possibly, though, I had made the change in the ms. you have. I know more about colonial architecture than I did in 1920, when I produced this specimen. Again—an old man's blessings for your lifting of a grievous burthen!

As for the proper channel of genuine self-expression on your part—in the last analysis, that is something which only you can discover, through experiments in all the lines which appeal to you. The things to write of seriously are the things which seem to you of such haunting and persistent interest (either as actualities or as symbols of conditions, trends, aspirations, and instincts) that you cannot feel easy until you have them down on paper in one way or another. When you've decided what those things are, you will be inwardly compelled to write of them with artistic truth, regardless of demands—truth, that is, to the images and conceptions as they stand in your mind. It may well be that your natural channel is one involving violent adventure—a thing symbolising for you the escape and dominance toward which everyone reaches. It is perfectly possible for artistic fiction to hinge upon events of physical conflict—provided those events are realistically rather than conven-

tionally handled, and provided they occupy a suitable and convincing place in the lives, emotions, and characters of the persons involved. So long as the events are seriously drawn as parts of the general life-stream, with their true proportional relationship to wider events clearly indicated, they can indeed form the subject-matter of genuine art. And the same—in general principle—goes very largely for the weird. Serious weird art is distinctly possible—although relatively few (certainly not myself, alas!) ever achieve it. The genuine artist in the weird is trying to crystallise in at least semi-tangible form one of several typical and indefinite moods unquestionably natural to human beings, and in some individuals very profound, permanent, and intense . . . . . moods involving the habitual lure and terror and imagination-stirring qualities of the unknown or half-known, the burning curiosity of the active mind concerning the fathomless abysses of inaccessible space which press in on us from every side, and the instinctive revolt of the restless ego against the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law. When a writer succeeds in translating these nebulous urges into symbols which in some way satisfy the imagination—symbols which adroitly suggest actual glimpses into forbidden dimensions, actual happenings following the myth-patterns of human fancy, actual voyages of thought or body into the nameless deeps of tantalising space, and actual evasions, frustrations, or violations of the commonly accepted laws of the cosmos—then he is a true artist in every sense of the word. He has produced genuine literature by accomplishing a sincere emotional catharsis.

As for the literature of actual life—one's ability to write that depends wholly upon one's real interest in and sympathy with people as a whole. Derleth has it—I haven't. The author of genuine human literature must be able to see a vast significance tantamount to cosmic symbolism in the daily acts and thoughts and struggles of people—and he must know these acts and thoughts and struggles well enough, and first-handedly enough, to write of them with fulness, vividness, and accuracy. This sense of virtual cosmic importance in what people do and think and feel—whether or not such acts, thoughts, and feelings are romantic or adventurous—is the crucial thing which makes real, all-around delineators of life. A reasonable period of testing will show you whether you have or haven't it. You say (in a mood like that which makes Derleth's environment-bound characters seem unconvincing to you) that you have no problems—that you dispose of such things by



the Gordian-knot method. Well and good—but surely you realise that vast numbers of people cannot do that. If you have the stuff of the life-delineator in you, you will be so curious about these other types of people that you can't be satisfied till you have studied the unfamiliar emotions and conditions and problems which beset them, and have imaginatively stepped into their personalities for a while and seen life through *their* eyes, not yours. This urge and ability to become, as it were, totally different people (in thought, speech, feelings, outlook, and all else) in quick succession, is the distinguishing quality of the really substantial fictionist. Look how Derleth does it—he, a husky young egotist of 23, can for a time *actually be*, in a psychological sense, a wistful, faded old lady of 85, with all the natural thoughts, prejudices, feelings, perspectives, fears, prides, mental mannerisms, and speech-tricks of such an old lady. Or he can be an elderly doctor—or a small boy—or a half-demented young mother—in every case understanding and entering into the type so fully that, for the moment, his interests and outlooks and difficulties and idioms are *those of the character*, with the corresponding qualities of August William Derleth quite forgotten. He can get the pathetic—or savage—or cold—or humorous—or ardent—or whatever it is—mood with perfect authenticity *for the time being*, no matter what his own moods tend to be, because he temporarily enters into the characters and sees what *they* (not Derleth) see and feels what *they* feel. It is mimicry on a grand scale. He can duplicate the mood because he knows objectively (and thence, by virtue of the right sort of imagination, subjectively) the natural factors creating it in each case. But of course not everybody can do that. I can't—and recognising my limitations, I soft-pedal the elaborate delineation of dissimilar characters. Long can't either—and *not* recognising his limitations he reels off page after page of alleged characterisation in which all the figures, from savants and demigods to bootblacks and charwomen, think and feel and act and talk exactly like little duplicate Belknaps! Love-stuff, of course, should be handled just like any of the other elements in the dull daily grind—as one realistic incident among others, without any special kind of treatment other than perfect truth to psychology and observed events. All *feigned* emotions like "romance" and "glamour" are cheap and inartistic. Dreiser is the boy to study when it comes to dealing with life—he or Balzac or Zola or de Maupassant. But only diligent and repeated experiment, and

searching self-analysis, can enable anyone to discover his own natural field. Go to it, Son—and here's hoping it'll turn out to be the weird!

Yrs. in doleful beard-pulling—

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584. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Desert City of Ghin—

Hour of the Rearing of the Sand-Burrowers

Dec. 5, 1932

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I must start off with a piece of what will be damned melancholy news to all of our group—a piece of news which gave me a jolt of dispiriting magnitude. On Nov. 23—only nine days after writing me the brisk, vigorous note which contained the news about A. S.—Whitehead succumbed at last to his long gastric illness. I can hardly believe it even now—for last winter he said the doctors had reached the source of his trouble and were promising steady improvement—but some sudden adverse development must have arisen. All who have heard the sad news feel infinitely depressed, for good old Canevin was such a brilliant, amiable, generous, courageous, learned, attractive, and altogether admirable chap. Dunedin must be collectively in mourning—and the blow to Whitehead's father, now 85, cannot but be appallingly severe. It is certainly a most damnable example of cosmic waste. Here in my wardrobe hangs the white tropical suit which he lent me in Dunedin and finally insisted on my keeping—and on the shelf not far from the Nameless Eikon stands the jar with the long mottled snake he caught and killed with his own hands. Well—he'll be long remembered by all who ever knew him. Many stories of his remain unpublished, including a new series centreing in a sinister and decaying old New England town (a kind of *Arkham*) called Chadbourne.

Yes—young Comte d'Erlette surely is coming along in the world, and I certainly think he will land somewhere among the recognised writers of America. The kid has a genuine sense of the drama of life, and is able to enter into the outlook and emotions of the various dissimilar human types to an astonishing extent.

Yrs. in the Black Brotherhood,

E'ch-Pi-El

585. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Dec. 7, 1932

Dear Malik:—

I have been an outspoken Whitehead admirer ever since I read his first story—*Sea Change*—in *W. T.* That tale attracted my especial attention because it anticipated an idea of my own—although using it in a way vastly different from that which I had planned. When the West Indian material began to appear my enthusiasm was doubled; for I could sense the realism of the background and feel a convincingness in the tales which most pulp material lacks. And of course I likewise appreciated the charm and erudition of the writing itself—a pleasing relief from the dominant crudeness and illiterateness of popular magazine stuff. I did not come into correspondence with H. S. till 1930, when Bernard Dwyer (who had previously made his epistolary acquaintance) lent me some of his unpublished mss. with instructions to return them to the author. In effecting this return, I naturally added a word expressive of my appreciation—both of the immediate specimens and of Canevinian work in general—and from that nucleus a correspondence of instant congeniality arose. The more I heard from Whitehead the better I liked him, and I appreciated it keenly when he invited me down to Dunedin for a stay of indefinite duration. I was not able to get there till May—but when I did arrive I found H. S. even more fascinating in person than in letters. It is doubtful if any other host ever reached quite his level of cordiality, thoughtfulness, and generosity over a period exceeding a fortnight. I really had, for his sake, to be careful what books or other possessions of his I openly admired; for like some open-handed Eastern prince he would insist on presenting me with whatever seemed to arouse my enthusiasm. (Example of generosity. He said last July that if he'd known I was going to be in New Orleans, he'd have insisted on my making a side-trip to Dunedin at his expense.) He compelled me to consider his wardrobe my own (for his physique was almost identical with mine), and there still hangs in my clothespress one of the white tropical suits he lent me—and finally insisted that I retain permanently as a souvenir. As I glance at my

curio shelf I see a long mottled snake in a jar, and reflect how good old Canevin caught and killed it with his own hands—thinking I might like a sample of Dunedin's lurking horrors. He was not afraid of the devil himself, and the seizure of that noxious wriggler was highly typical of him. The astonishing versatility and multiplicity of attractive qualities which he possessed sounds almost fabulous to one who did not know him in person. He was the idol of the local population both young and old, and the centre of an adoring group of small boys about 10 or 11 years old, who thought there was nobody on this planet quite as great—as playmate, story-teller, adviser, leader, and instructor—as their Padre. The snuffing out of such a beloved and useful character is surely a flagrant example of the cosmos's typical wastefulness.

...

Whitehead's best work is among the finest weird writing of the present time, and it is a pity that plans for book publication of a collection of his stories fell through. His leisurely style greatly enhanced the lifelike convincingness of what he had to say—giving the reader a vivid understanding of the chosen scene and stratum of life, and leading up imperceptibly to the one point of departure from reality. These stories illustrate admirably the precept I always try to impress on weird beginners—to avoid all extravagance, freakish or capricious motivation, redundancy of marvels, and the like, and to follow absolute realism except for the *single* violation of natural law which has been chosen as a subject. Of all H. S.'s stories, I think *Passing of a God* was indisputably the best. *The Black Beast*, *The Tree Man*, *Cassius*, *The Great Circle*, and others also rank very high. There were many minor pot-boilers, of course—as there are among everyone's writings. He had a splendid tale under way called *The Bruise*, which (at my suggestion) involved the lost and fabulous Pacific continent of Mu. I am wondering whether it was ever published. ...

Regarding realism and character-drawing—as I said before, that is not the only form of truly artistic literature, hence no one need waste time deploring a lack of aptitude in this direction. There are other ways of expressing moods and emotions. Relatively few persons have the power of imaginatively entering into characters radically dissimilar from themselves, but many can command a reasonable variety of literary types by personifying different aspects of their own character. All of



us are more or less complex, so that our personalities have more than one side. If we are reasonably clever we can make as many different characters out of ourselves as there are sides to our personalities—taking in each case the isolated essence and filling out the rest of the character with fictitious material as different as possible from anything either in our own lives or in any other characters we may have manufactured from other sides of ourselves. Thus Ismeddin and d'Artois are clearly different sides of yourself, properly differentiated, filled out, and backgrounded. Ismeddin has your Orientalism and love of dashing arbitrary boundaries aside. Pierre, on the other hand, represents your love of logic and calculation—the mathematician in you. Of course the representation is not as clear and bold as all that—but you can undoubtedly appreciate the principle. Another mode of deriving varied characters is that of simple and accurate observation. Often we may be neither fertile in imagining alien motives and manners nor apt in personifying different sides of ourselves; yet may be able to record varied characters through our clear perception and faithful memory of the way other people whom we have actually known act and seem to think and feel. When we are of this type it is obligatory for us to possess a wide acquaintance among a great variety of people of all classes, in order that we may have an ample reservoir on which to draw. We are then able to populate a story not only with a character drawn from ourselves (although that will naturally be the strongest and most vivid one, since we can never know anybody else as well as we know ourselves), but with other characters drawn from those whom we have studied. Often this method is combined with the ability to draw different characters from different sides of the same personality—an ability which can occasionally be applied to other personalities as well as to our own. In such a case a relatively small circle of acquaintances can be made to furnish a wide array of fictional characters. The worst of all ways to devise characters is to borrow or adopt them from other authors' literary figures. That is fatal to realism. No literary figure is perfect, for distortion creeps into all adaptation; and when we try to adopt something which is itself adopted the imperfection is disastrously multiplied. Keep to a policy of first-hand transcription from life if you would create living characters.

However, as you yourself have suggested, and as I have said before,

it certainly isn't necessary to draw every possible human type in order to produce literature of a certain kind—especially *weird* literature. In many sorts of literature—*weird* most of all—the *real* protagonists of the drama are *phenomena*, and *not people at all*; hence if we strike the proper atmosphere and unfold the chosen events in the most vivid possible fashion, we do not need to rely very heavily on the delineation of subtleties of human characters. It will be sufficient if our human figures do not act in too improbable and inconsistent a fashion. They must be accurate enough not to spoil the realism of the picture—but beyond that we can afford to let them remain lightly sketched. It is another branch of art whose chief ingredient is the complete portrayal of human nature. And more—certain types of events do not call for more than a limited number of human types, so that we may often "get by" splendidly in specialised fictional branches with a limited cast of characters which would seem grotesquely one-sided to an universal artist like Shakespeare or Balzac. Who would claim, for example, that Two-Gun Bob of Texas needs to understand the psychology of elderly New England school-teachers in order to write about Valusia, primal Africa, or Roman Britain? No—there's no use in pausing to envy or imitate the other guy. The way to achieve art is to be oneself and forget all about it. Just set down what's inside you clamouring to get out—or what tantalises you in dreams and seems to defy your power to crystallise it and pin it down.

Blessings of the Prophet, and of the Elder Ones, upon you,  
Abdul Alhazred

586. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Dec. 11, 1932

Khi-Khi, Conquering Lion of Judah:—

I wail! I yowl! I tear my fur and whiskers! The news casts a cloud of melancholy over all the Providence Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Tau! Khi-Khi, Great Battle-Axe of Eblis, Heir of the Preadamite Sultans, hath gone out into the night-hung Hills of Never to join Great Nimrod, the guider of his youth! Aië! Aië! M'rsu! M'raaw! M'raaaaaww!

I, too, am unable to do the calamity justice in a fitting dirge. Would that news of the hero's return might upset all our lamentation! May Poblí-K'hah wax strong and vengeful, and rally around him all the savage warriors of the land for a mission of death in the purple hills!

Abdul Alhazred

587. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Decr. 14, 1932

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... I haven't had time to write anything new lately—and indeed, my recent things have been received so indifferently that I am glad to pause & take stock of things preparatory to a fresh start. As for anthologies—the only one I know that I'm due (possibly) to appear in is the one which Price is planning. He's still in doubt as to what story he wants. (Probably *The Picture in the House*.) I suppose I mentioned *Creeps by Night*, out last spring, which had my *Music of Erich Zann*. Incidentally—although O'Brien doesn't mention me this year, the O. Henry Memorial Prize Annual gives my *Strange High House in the Mist* a first-class rating, & my *In the Vault* a second-class rating. ....

I was depressed two weeks ago last Saturday at learning of the death of Henry S. Whitehead, my delightful Florida host of 1931. He had written me very cheerfully—and with mention of future plans—as lately as Nov. 14, hence the bad news formed a double shock. He had long suffered from a gastric trouble, but during recent months it had seemed to be yielding to medical treatment. This will be a bad blow to his father—aged 85—and all of Dunedin will be in mourning for one who was its veritable idol. Whitehead was born in 1882, & graduated from Harvard in 1904, in the class with President-Elect Roosevelt. I have never met a person more brilliant, courageous, generous, learned, attractive, witty, & altogether admirable. Besides being an author he was an Episcopal clergyman—rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Dunedin. He always tried to minimise his illness—and even now it is

difficult to believe that death can have overtaken one so brisk, active, & optimistic. ....

When you assume the "rightness" of the dying civilisation you can hardly mean more than that it was roughly adequate to the special conditions of the bygone age which evolved it. No civilisation can have any "rightness" or other meaning apart from the conditions to which it is related. The obsolescent western culture was the product of a life hinging on agriculture & handicraft. In a machine age it has no meaning—for it is not able to offer the bulk of the population a chance to live adequately—or live at all, for that matter. Old-fashioned economics take no account of machine industry, & break down under the realities of a machine age. They are far more impracticable than even bolshevism—because they will not work at all! Something absolutely *must* be changed. The question is no longer "whether or not" but simply "what & how".

Christianity cannot be taken seriously. It is naive & unscientific to blame the world for not conforming to it—since it is a chimerical & poetic illusion to which human nature is utterly alien. It is meaningless—because no race or nation ever could or ought to conform to it. The only blameable thing is the stupid stubbornness with which people have continued to pretend belief in this irrelevant & unworkable Oriental importation. Had it been cast overboard long ago, the western world would have had all the earlier start toward a rational system of administration based on the actual needs of actual people. All that has enabled European mankind to survive in the past is the ignoring of the theoretical Christian doctrine & ethic. Very amusingly, the Christians of the 3d & 4th centuries A. D. were in exactly the same position as the ragged hunger marchers of today. Then *they* were the surly bolsheviks, ignorant & intolerant of civilisation, & arrayed against the prevailing vested interests & the surface of law & order. Then a political accident put them on top—and they forthwith became the vested plutocrats themselves, prepared to oppress others as they had lately been oppressed. They never had half the justification of the modern hunger marchers, for the latter are fighting for the right to live—a basic right which no one can deny. Nor would these marchers establish a wholly chaotic regime if they won by force. Modern Russia is far from a total chaos, although its material conditions—and most of its aesthetic conditions—at present would seem uncomfortable to us.



..... Yes—I wish I had Dunsany's artistic skill. He has always dabbled in some plastic art as a side line. Weather here is snowy, but not as bitterly cold as it might be.

With every good wish—

Yrs sincerely—  
HPLovecraft

588. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Dec. 20, 1932

Dear Malik:—

Help! Don't shoot! I surrender! *Zemargad* is in neither the *Necronomicon* nor in von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, unless perchance it be in that passage (*Nec.* xii, 58—p. 984) in Naacal hieroglyphics, whose fullest purport I was never able to unravel. The Yashish passage in von Junzt (footnote, p. 751, ed. 1839)—

ΔΟΥΡΥΓΟΔΩΔΟΙΥΩΣΤΙΝΟΥ:

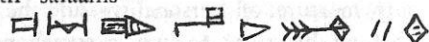
etc.—hints at a vague, ultra-dimensional realm of nameless horror best transliterated as *H'mar*; but the resemblance of this word to *Zemargad* is too strained to be other than fortuitous. Nor is the doubtful allusion to *Khad* in the *Book of Eibon* any real clue. The *Plakotic Manuscripts* mention the subterranean gulf of *Zim*, but all scholars from de Galimatias and Zu Dumkopf onward have agreed that this is really a reference to the Vaults of *Zin*, so well known to all students of Alhazred and von Junzt. No—there's no use in concealing plain ignorance; and I must flatly admit that I never heard the name *Zemargad* before, and that the volumes in my library are unanimous in failing to solve the mystery. You might ask our friend Klarkash-Ton, whose Oriental attainments dwarf mine into non-existence, but I fear this problem will prove a tough nut to crack. . . .

Some stories are so interdependent in their parts, and so inextricably tied up with a certain proportioning, that they wouldn't be worth a damn if mangled to suit some pachydermatous mob-caterer who knows and cares nothing for genuine quality; and when this is the case my respect goes to the chap who insists that they appear as written or not at all. This has nothing to do with work which is capable of change without injury, and is not in the least connected

with that flighty and long-haired sort of "temperament" which I despise as much as you do. Often one knows that a ms. isn't much good, but forbids change lest it be made still worse. You can generally tell the sensible sort of fastidiousness—the sort which springs from a real respect for aesthetic integrity and an unwillingness to violate it—from the affected sort, by noting the reactions of the person in question outside the immediate field of ms. text. When the textual fastidiousness proceeds from mere caprice and pose, those qualities will usually appear in other departments of life. In general, I think a writer's attitude toward his own work depends largely upon how much of himself is involved in it. When a man is overflowing with talents, and has many holds on life besides that of self-expression, he can afford to take his writing lightly. On the contrary, if he be only mediocre in other activities, his writing will naturally loom large in his emotions. It forms in such a case the man's only hold on life—his only measure of personality—and he will consequently tend to feel that all his right to live is somehow bound up in integrity of expression. All his eggs are in one basket, as it were. Violations of his best efforts and of the principles behind them will appear to him like violations of his inmost personality and standards—like breaches of honour or infractions against good taste. And why not? . . . for they are indeed violations of what he most respects. You tend—as your reactions toward Derleth's serious stories illustrate—not to sympathise vividly with the type of person whose life is of the imagination rather than of the external world, and with whom imponderables count more than do visible acts and phenomena. Accordingly you are probably apt to be a little more severe than is necessary toward those whose scruples and sensitivenesses spring from such a psychological constitution. As a matter of fact, there is room in life and literature for both types—the sensitive dreamer and the man of action. Civilisation would be pretty one-sided and sterile if both did not exist in something like even proportions. In some cultures, of course, there is indeed a disconcerting lack of balance in one direction or the other—too many dreamers, for instance, in India, and too few in America. But in general I think the ideal attitude for both the dreamer and the doer toward his opposite is one of "live and let live". I always try to be fair toward the value of doers, even though my own instinctive sympathies are on the side of the dreamers. Indeed—no one

could have a higher respect for the accomplishments of doers than I have. All I really despise in that line is the material profit motive when carried beyond the stage where it is linked with the maintenance of good living conditions. But on the other hand, I hate a posing and self-conscious "aesthete" who thinks that the possession of artistic sensitiveness or the pursuit of artistic activities sets him off from the rest of mankind and justifies a separate mode of dress and barbering, and a separate code of manners. It's about an even thing which I hate the more—a languishing pseudo-Paderewski in a Windsor tie, or a "practical" clod who doesn't care what he does so long as he is paid for it. Neither type, at its respective extreme, has to my mind a proper conception of what the aesthetic principle and its normal relation to life really are.

With salaams—



589. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Tenbarnes—

Decr. 22, 1932

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

..... As for politics—a vote for Thomas would have been simply thrown away ..... although in this case it wouldn't have caused any change in the results. When there are two main candidates in the field with any real choice between them, it is never wise to vote for a third & hopelessly minor one whom you may happen to like better than either of the big boys. If too many do that, it may result in the election of the main guy they want *least*. Common sense tells us that the big fellows are the only possible winners. If you think one is any better than the other, vote for him—for he is the best you'll have any chance of getting. In this contest Roosevelt was undoubtedly preferable to Hoover, & Thomas was probably nearer realities than either of the others—but much in Thomas's programme was unwise. To give large powers of decision to the mass of the people is hopelessly silly & disastrous. Some way must be arranged to effect a fresh distribution of resources—now that intensive mechanisation has upset the ancient economic order—yet without removing the machinery of

government from carefully trained hands. A document of tremendous importance is the recent report of the "technocracy" group which studied under the auspices of Columbia University. As you may have seen, it emphasises all that thoughtful observers have long said of the effect of the displacement of men by machines. The fact that all the work of the world can now be done by a relatively small part of the population is something which will necessitate a recasting of the whole fabric of human industry & its relation to the possession of resources. One may only hope that the transition to a more realistic order can be accomplished without a chaotic revolution & without any break in the cultural traditions of Western Civilisation.

Your mention of Burns, the chain-gang fugitive, was unusually timely—as recent headlines have doubtless apprised you. It's hard to get at the truth of matters like this, but even with all allowances the system of convict labour is worth looking into. Police & legal tyranny are at their absolute worst in Texas, where the intimidation of the citizenry is almost incredible. When Robert E. Howard first brought the subject to my attention I thought he was sentimentally exaggerating or falling for radical propaganda until he cited specific cases from first-hand information. Large outside oil interests control the law-enforcing machinery, & the rest of the trouble is supplied by the naturally lax standard of order in a frontier region inheriting traditions of cheap human life & ready physical violence. Howard is so used to violence that he can hardly believe it when I tell him that there are no fights on the public streets of the East except in slums & gang-ridden areas.

As for reading—Sherwood Anderson is one of those figures whom I respect as real & important artists, but who actually (the fault being mine) bore me to somnolence. I haven't read any of his recent things. I must read more of Faulkner. What I *have* read (probably because my surviving aunt had it on a long-term loan & sub-lent it to me) is your new favourite, *The Fountain*. That is the real stuff—language & substance. It reflects a philosophy perhaps a trifle at variance with actual fact—a philosophy assigning rather too much significance to the human personality & emotions—but that does not detract from its value as a picture of the sensitive type of person who entertains such a perspective. Your information concerning the author is very timely, & adds to my interest in the book. After all, there is a vast amount to be said for the contemplative mood when it is separated from illusions



involving fallacy. Sorry *Peter Ashley* proved so mediocre—I was going to get hold of it because of my fascinated admiration for Charleston.

As for the linkage of realism & prying impertinence—I still think it's hard to get the real stuff about life, to any widely representative extent, without some rather painful prying. Of course, sympathetic confidences bring out many things, but the hidden factors in many types of household are things hard to get at—in their actual form—except by extorting & worming out information not likely to come to light otherwise. It is relatively easy to fathom the lives of the humbler folk who live more or less in public & possess very few reticences; but when one tries to round out the picture & tackle the more dignified sort, the problem changes. Still—compromises are possible, & it's hard to say that all realists are bounders . . . although Dreiser certainly is, as judged by the unsavoury revelations he has made in the public press about his own family.

Yr most obt Servt  
E'ch-Pi-El

590. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Jan. 6, 1933

Dear Mr. Wright:—

Whitehead's passing has caused more universal regret among the group than any other event of recent years. He was almost undoubtedly the most well-rounded character contributing to the pulp magazines, and it will be long before work of the Caneyin calibre can be found again. I am glad that he furnished you with biographical data by which later notices can be checked. In my own rambling account I forgot to mention that H. S. W. was a *liturgiologist* of note—performing valuable services in many churches through artistic arrangements of the rituals and sacerdotal pageantry. No doubt his own notes mentioned this point. I read *The Chadbourne Episode* with extreme interest, and

wish you could get hold of the other two Chadbourne stories which are in existence. One was accepted by the Clayton outfit and returned when *Strange* and *Astounding* collapsed, while the other seems not to have been submitted anywhere. Whitehead also had another story under way—his old tale *The Bruise*, with a new ending (suggested and mapped out by myself) involving the fabulous lost continent of Mu 20,000 years ago; but whether this was ever put in final publishable shape I don't know. . . .

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
H. P. L.

591. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Tenbarnes—  
Jany. 12, 1933

Emperor of Esoteric Elusiveness:—

Ecce! Whilst you were in classick Cantabrigia writing Grandpa that you couldn't get to Providentium, an aged man was sitting in a telephone booth in the United Sigar Store at the corner of 8th Street and 6th Avenue, Manhattan, calling Sherwood 2-4820, and receiving the dismal news that Curator Morton wou'd not be back on the job till the following Tuesday! Thus does Fate conspire to keep great souls apart. But what, you may ask, could 8th Street and 6th Avenue have to do with Old Theobald? Well—it's this way. Just before Christmas I received an invitation from Papa and Mamma Long to drop around for the holidays and surprise Little Sonny out of a whole year's moustachelet-growth. Reflecting on the probable mildness of the weather, the anti-cold protection afforded by the pest zone's subway system, and the reduced stagecoach fares—eight shillings and four pence—to that noxious region, I decided to accept—tho' reserving Christmas Day itself for a dinner and exchange of remembrances with my aunt in a civilised Providence setting. Behold me, then, on Dec. 26 at two-ten a. m., embarking upon the New Amsterdam coach of the New-England Transportation Co.—heavy with the annual feast consum'd eleven hours previously. The route is somewhat changed, so that I was whirl'd

through Olneyville, North Scituate, Foster, Danielson, Willimantic, and Hartford before being dropt down to New-Haven and along the familiar shoar line route. My sentiments were of mingled homesickness at leaving New-England, and of tantalisation at being headed toward Richmond, Charleston, and St. Augustine without being able to continue thereto. Dawn came in the neighbourhood of Darien, in His Majesty's Colony of Connecticut, and some time later I took my customary glance at the odd spire of St. Paul's Church in Eastchester—my visit to which was so curiously deferr'd in bygone days. The coach, having pass'd thro' Fordham, enter'd New-York by the way of Bloomingdale Road, so that I was set down squarely at Belknap's door at eight-thirty a. m., without any descent into the miasmatic reaches of lower Manhattan. The Child was still abed, but Pa and Ma smuggled the old gentleman into the dining room. When at length Sonny did toddle drowsily out to breakfast he was properly electrified to see his Grandpa nodding over the morning *Tribune*—and then and there began a session of arguments on everything from bolshevism to the Iroquois Indians, which lasted till eleven-thirty p. m., Jany. 2. I was provided with a room in the flat next door (where I had one in 1930), so that the visit was very conveniently centralised. At three-thirty p. m., came my *second* Christmas dinner of the year—after which I foreswore the scales until the completion of a suitable reducing programme. The next day I gave Loveman a surprise at Dauber and Pine's, dropt in on Kirk, visited the Whitney Museum, and sent my vain message to Patersonium as chronicled at the outset. I also did some fountain-pen changing at the Waterman office, tho' I am not yet satisfy'd with the result. I simply *cannot* get anything free-flowing enough for my light touch and speed of writing. Wednesday I surprised Talman at his office, and looked Wandrei up in his Greenwich-Village Eyrie—84 Horatio Street, Apt. 4-B. The kid is finishing a novel which he began in September, and doesn't seem to want to go home. That night I also met Sonny's hack-writer friend Neil Moran—for the first time, though for years we have been *almost* meeting. He seems to be a very pleasant chap—have you met him? I also went over to Loveman's new flat at 17 Middagh Street—where for the first time his various art treasures are adequately display'd. My generous host presented me with two fine museum objects (don't get envious, O Fellow-Curator!)—to wit, a prehistorick stone eikon from Mexico, and an African flint implement, with primitively

graven ivory handle; both from the collection of the late Hart Crane, which Crane's mother turned over to him. Thursday Sonny, Wandrei, and I did the Metropolitan Museum, viewing the newly acquired archaick Greek Apollo about which so much has been written. Friday the Child and I argued all day except for a cinema show to which he dragg'd me. Incidentally, I was cinema'd nearly every night—marking my first sight of such performances since last June, when I view'd cinemas under the same auspices. Friday night there was a gang meeting at two-thirty, attended only by Wandrei, Loveman, McGrath, and good old Leeds—who has a job at Coney Island in a place where used correspondence-school courses are sold by mail. Talman and Kirk couldn't come, and Kleiner didn't answer our postcard notice. Orton didn't get our notice till Monday, when he telephoned—too late for a personal meeting. He expects to pass thro' Providence shortly. Saturday Moran, Wandrei, Sonny, and I did the Am. Mus. of Nat. History, and later that night I saw the old year out at Loveman's. Sunday I saw the inside of the new Riverside Church (but Gothick stuff!) for the first time, and did the Brooklyn Museum with Sonny—seeing the new Dutch rooms. On this occasion I had the Child take his first ride on the new 8th Avenue subway—a contraption which I had sampled alone on the preceding Thursday. Monday Sonny and I explored the newly housed Museum of Modern Art—11 West 53d Street—seeing the delightful collection of "American Primitives" on the top floor, and paying our respects to Whistler's famous painting of his mother (lent by the Louvre) . . . . . which Sonny, however, thought a bit bourgeois, Puritanical, and commonplace. That afternoon at three-thirty came *another* gargantuan turkey gorge—my third of the holiday season, and fourth of the fall and winter, counting Thanksgiving. Gawd keep me away from the scales!

Then more argument and cinema . . . . . and finally a session of argument again. At eleven-thirty I departed for the 'bus terminal (return route uncertain—had to take the thing at the source) and was in ample time for the twelve-ten coach. The route this time was shore line to New-Haven, then up to Middletown, and then across to Willimantic, cutting out Hartford. Dawn came at North-Scituate, in His Majesty's Colony of *Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations*, and at six-forty-five a. m. I was deposited at the terminal in my native town. God Save the King! I found twenty-two letters awaiting me—besides oceans of piled-



up periodicals—and am still wallowing in this accumulation. It's a great life!

But *one* item of that accumulation demands a paragraph by itself—not only a paragraph, but a poem and a paean! It was a package from good old Cook . . . . . a gift derived from his ruthlessly self-disintegrated library. A three-volume gift printed in 1892 and now out of print . . . . . and something for which I have been pining since 1919. Can I name it without dangerous cardiac palpitations? Behold, Sir—your Grandpa is at last the proud and extatic owner of *Melmoth, The Wanderer*, by Charles Robert Maturin!

Pax vobiscum—  
Theobaldus

592. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Caverns of Khaf  
Jan. 12, 1933

Dear Malik:—

As for the discussion of one's attitude toward one's writings—of course the whole matter is too complex for any snap verdict. There is the whole matter of point of view to start with. You say that "we write to sell"—whereas it is my cardinal principle not to write for any such purpose. For cash I will do anything honourable *except* write original fiction. That one field, with me, has to be reserved for sincerely disinterested effort, because (a) it is the one channel of real expression which I possess, and (b) because experience has shewn me that I cannot dabble in pulp cheapness without hopelessly ruining anything I have to say. If I had the ready facility of Derleth and others, it would be a different story—but each separate individual has his own peculiar problems, and hasty generalisations are always misleading.

As for "dominating one's medium"—that is a very intricate and relative matter. Naturally, no artistic result is ever produced (save in rare instances like *Kubla Khan*) without a certain amount of conscious intellectual direction of the emotional and imaginative impulses seeking an outlet. The calculative mind of the artist always has some authority in determining the given product. But after all, it is invariably the un-

conscious image-forming which gives the work its real vitality and differentiates it from mere photography and mechanism; so that we cannot impose conscious criticism on our efforts beyond certain limits without seriously impairing the strength and spirit of the result. The question is—what are those limits? Probably they differ with different persons, though it is to be noted that those authors whose habitual methods are most conscious and intellectual are generally weakest in the creation of a convincing atmosphere. In most cases they "dominate their medium" at the expense of what that medium has to convey. I am not enough of an egotist to care for the empty sensation of domination. My one aim is to have my result as intrinsically good as it can be made, and it is immaterial to me how much or how little my conscious intellect may have contributed toward that result. I think that art is always greater than any man . . . . . a fact, despite the somewhat platitudinous sound of the assertion when unqualified by explanation. I am not interested in domination, but I am interested in authentic self-expression.

My only concern is to pin down adequately for my own future reference and enjoyment some fancy which my imagination half-conceives—and incidentally (as an abstract satisfaction) to do the pinning in the most effective possible manner. That I never succeed to any extent is another matter, scarcely relevant to the point of issue. Certainly, I have always succeeded *less* the more I have conceded to external or material demands.

Probably you are right in saying that some reluctance to change work is due to indolence—but oddly enough, I have a certain respect for that form of indolence. To begin with, I do not very seriously reprehend any sort of laziness. All work is really vain, and the lazy man is often wisest in the long run. In the case of an author—it may be that a tale of his could by hard work be changed without loss of quality. But the chances are that it could *not* thus be *improved*—so that the painful labour of change would be expended toward no intrinsically worthy end. A writer who might be willing to sweat and strain endlessly if he thought he was achieving *better work* thereby, might very justly be unwilling to put an equal amount of painful labour into a task *not* leading toward improvement, but merely helping to suit the cheap taste of an insensitive and mob-pandering editorial upstart. . . . In my attitude toward auctorial indolence, I suppose I really reveal a certain amount of personal bias. Undeniably, I have a contempt for any per-

formance of *hard work* when the object is not *intrinsic excellence* . . . . . or else survival on decent terms. And I have an unconquerable tendency to demand a certain *separation* of excellence-work and survival-work . . . . . seemingly illogical, and yet perhaps not without an obscure justification based on the tendency of survival-efforts to cut into excellence-efforts and vice versa. What I really want is *any* kind of a non-literary job paying \$15.00 per week or more—plus enough unworried leisure to write with excellence as a sole object, and with no thought of audience or professional markets.

I fancy you get my idea. I have no prejudice at all against the alteration of work when the object is actual improvement. Indeed, a good share of my stuff represents the result of repeated revisions. Some are better able to improve their work by change than are others, and I would recommend that each separate writer consult his own ability in deciding whether a certain case of alteration would be for the better or for the worse. When a mediocre writer knows he has done his best in a certain direction, and feels that further change would be disastrous, the sensible thing for him to do (if quality be his supreme concern) is to set his foot down and refuse to make a mess of the little he has achieved. That is often my own position regarding efforts of mine. Right here the extreme difference in our sympathies becomes manifest. You exalt the artist at the expense of his work, whereas I consider the work the most important thing about the artist. Your picture of the artist "refusing to worship his work" and buckling down to "master" it has only a limited appeal to me. Certainly, an artist ought not to be satisfied till he has done his best, so that he ought not to consider his work inviolate until it represents his maximum effort; but once it *has* become the best he can do, the only proper course for him is to let it alone. If his cold consciousness insists on giving such work another shape—"asserting mastery", as you would phrase it—the new shape is generally attained at the expense of the work's vitality, so that the "mastery" is a very hollow thing. I'm looking for *excellence of product*—not any cheap and empty "mastery". I never think of myself when trying to capture a mood or idea, since I'm too busy with the mood or idea itself. So far as the creative process is concerned, the work must be everything and the worker nothing. However—I do not fail to concede that the author of extremely vigorous mentality is usually able to impose conscious modification on his work more successfully than the author

of more languid cerebration. The important thing is for each individual author to learn his own limitations and base his policy sensibly upon them.

Possibly I have made myself clearer than before. My attitude, as you see, is based upon a frank dislike of professional writing as a pursuit for persons anxious to approach actual literary expression. I think that literary aspirants ought to follow paying jobs outside literature and its fake penumbra, and keep their writing free from commercial objects. Later on, when they have achieved great perfection, they may or may not be able to sell their things; but that ought not to enter into their heads. They have a full-time job in pursuing excellence for its own sake. As for the business of supplying artificial formula-writing to the various commercial media catering to herd tastes—that is an honest enough trade, but in my opinion more proper for clever craftsmen having no real urge toward self-expression than for persons who really have something definite to say. As a concrete illustration I refer you to Putnam's rejection of my collected tales for book-form publication in 1931. They said that the stuff reflected the cheap standards of the popular professional magazines, and upon analysis and reflection I had to admit that they were right. In spite of my conscious defiance of the cheap Philistine ideal, I have become insidiously tainted with it to some degree merely through seeing so much of *W. T.* and knowing its demands so well. I'd have been a lot better off if I'd never tried placing stuff in the damn thing. Of course, I might not have been any good anyhow—but at least I wouldn't have been quite so rotten.

As for Soviet Russia—I can't excuse its unnecessary demolition of those traditional folkways which give to normal life so much of its illusion of direction and purpose. All this wreckage is perpetrated in the name of *equality*, which is after all a very meaningless, mathematical thing. I agree that existing systems—essentially plutocratic oligarchy—are unadapted to the problems of a mechanised future, but I don't think that such a fanatical overturn is needed in order to restore the ability of willing workers to be sure of a decent livelihood. What will have to come will doubtless be allied to *socialism*, but that's a long way from the *communism* which destroys half the zest of life to cater to a mere theoretical ideal. Undoubtedly many individual features of the Soviet organization are worth borrowing and adapting to the different conditions of the western world, but the system as a whole seems to me to



be a good thing to keep out of one's own country. The follies of American life are numerous enough, but one can escape from them by leading a retired existence. On the other hand, Russia's follies appear to be so obtrusively forced on every individual that escape is almost impossible. . . .

Thy obeisant Slave—  
Abdul Alhazred

593. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Jan. 13, 1933

Dear Mortonius:—

Have just heard of a rival to Maxfield's—Chauncey E. Green, of Hope Valley, R. I., who offers 137 varieties of ice cream—though not all are on sale on any one day. Some of the bizarre flavours are *pond lily*, *pepsin*, *mango*, *wild bee honey*, *dandeberry*, *manzanita*, *sweet corn*, *guava*, and *snow apple*. Aunt Julia will surely have to go some to lick Chauncey on variety! We'll have to investigate Chauncey. Westerly coaches pass through Hope Valley (so do the New York Greyhounds), but the fare is probably rather formidable. I've never been off the coach there, but it's a delightfully idyllick early-American village which tantalises me every time I whizz through it. I got this dope on Chauncey from a newspaper writeup. Only twelve old reliable staples, the same all the year round, and six exotic brands, changed daily. It would take more than twenty visits to clean up Chauncey's repertoire.

Yr. obt.—

Theobaldus

594. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Tenbarnes—

Jany. 20, 1933.

Son:—

.....  
..... What we commonly regard as simple emotions are in most cases very far from that—being complex and sometimes capricious

or even contradictory groups of totally unrelated emotions, which change irresponsibly and imperceptibly before we can reach anything like a genuine analysis. The interaction of the components of these groups, as they strike back and influence the underlying instincts, is of tremendous and hopeless complexity—and well illustrates the capriciousness and essential meaninglessness of everything in the emotional field.

What I said sometime back regarding the non-remarkableness of the elaborate sensations which come from purely capricious and mechanical causes ought to dispose of your exaltation of "unfathomably rich emotional phenomena which alter characters, transform lives, and in the social realm occasion murders, marriages, procreation of the species, and incalculably more." Do not irrelevant trifles determine everything? Have not lives been changed by the missing of a morning train, or battles determined by what a general ate the night before? Many a man has married because he was drunk, and George Jean Nathan once pointed out that most of the great philosophers probably thought and reasoned as they did because of such minor and overlooked factors as diet, digestion, wife's temper, debts, and so on. A stomach-ache may have just as much effect on the world, and almost as much on an individual's thought, as an ecstatic adoration of the Virgin Mary. What is more—you betray subjectiveness and conventionality in taking for granted the importance of such things as character, life, murder, marriage, procreation, and so on. What do these things really amount to in the cosmos? All things are merely incidents in a blind cyclic flux from nowhere to nowhere, so far as probability suggests. The fact that emotions cause great consequences in the lives of those not sufficiently strong or sufficiently on guard to resist them means absolutely nothing. A plain knock on the head or knife-thrust between the ribs can change a life to nothingness, while a bad tooth infection can alter a person's psychology, motivation, personality, social adaptability, and intelligence level. I don't see where your argument is. Even your climactic parallel fails to sustain it—for as a matter of fact even the greatest of the philosophers with his psychological problems *is* only the natural and inevitable result of two cells stuck together to form an egg. Of course there are many steps between the original egg-cell and the full-panoplied Galpinus or Democritus, but it is all a fixed mechanical process resulting from the structure of the universe. The full-blown and subjectively powerful and important-seeming emotion which moulds character is of

course the product of a vast number of accidental association-processes superadded to a simple reflex—but that does not make it a whit more *truly* important or typical of cosmic design than is the itch of a flea-bitten dog. Such *virtual*, empirical, apparent, or relative importance as it may have is wholly artificial—to be gauged only by the thin and variable standard of effect on a certain variable personality under certain momentary conditions. Any really serious estimate of such pseudo-importance is a mockery. True, the emotion may operate powerfully on a given individual under a given set of conditions—but so may the kick of an army mule. There is nothing in all this to demand exaltation and bated breath. If the damn thing tickles pleasantly and doesn't do anybody any harm, let it alone. Certainly, some of our finest diversions and strongest-nonprimitive reasons for living come from *the intelligent manipulation* of such raw material. So also do fine things come from the intelligent manipulation of lumpish bronze, random bricks, aimless colours, and casual sounds. But if the damn thing tickles or grates *unpleasantly*, there's nothing "sacred" about it through a rational analysis of its purely biochemical origin and cosmic irrelevance. Emotion is essentially *raw material*. It is a magnificent thing to harness and use, but a damned poor and inappropriate thing to obey as a master or worship as a god.

.....

.... All of the pseudo-importance felt by man himself before he surveys the wider field necessarily drops away—as does the illusion of a fly's giganticism when we remove the magnifying-glass through which we have been looking. It still remains a fact that man is the most complex organism in this immediate part of the universe—but *what of it?* Nobody tries to deny the obvious facts regarding man's consciousness and grasp on certain parts of the external world. His superiority to other immediate forms of matter is clear, and we can even get a hint at the precise structural reasons for that superiority. What the de-bunker attacks is merely the absurd and gratuitous (though natural enough as a result of early ignorance) assumption of the tradition-blinded part of mankind that the race is especially differentiated from the rest of molecular matter, especially endowed with ideas not coming through the senses, and especially important to the mythical consciousness governing the cosmos. And no de-bunking is too drastic for such puerility—into which I hope to Pegāna you are not falling! ..

Life itself—the especial form of union betwixt carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and other elements in which certain unique processes and energy-forms develop—is probably a widely-scattered phenomenon; but there is no reason to think that its more complex forms of growth (dependent as these are upon environment) are even remotely similar in widely separated parts of the universe, or that the psychological attributes of any one highly complex branch are paralleled in any other. Such things as honour, beauty, love, etc. are by no means to be regarded as other than local to the momentary race of primates harbouring these conceptions. On the other hand, *hunger* is probably basic with all vital compounds. The number of bodies in the cosmos containing life-forms at any one time is probably vastly less than was commonly supposed prior to twenty years ago—since we now believe life-sustaining planets to be very rare accidents. However, even so, it is not likely that terrestrial man is the most complex of all things in the *totality* of the varied galaxies—or at least it's only an even guess that he is. And in the endless history of time and space it would be foolish to fancy that he has not been vastly surpassed vigintillions of times.

Yr. obt. hble. Servt.,  
Grandpa.

595. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 21, 1933.

Dear R E H:—

.....

..... No possible system can ever give the individual that almost wholly unrestricted choice of action and enterprise which he had in the agricultural-handicraft past, but that is nobody's fault. It is merely the inevitable result of an increasing population—which causes people to get in one another's way more and more—and of a mechanised industrial system which makes production impossible to the average unaided individual, yet makes it virtually unlimited in quantity for the individual



or group in possession of the elaborate machinery and resources of production. These two factors are wholly natural and inevitable, and can never be banished. It is useless to sit back and regret the passing of the Golden Age of individualism. Dense population and machinery are upon us, and the only thing to do is to adapt our lives and standards to fit the existing realities. Our fight cannot logically be against these basic realities, but must be merely against their abuses. We can legitimately demand that the new crowding and quantity production be not used as a basis for *one-sided* change. If the majority have to alter their ways because of new conditions, so must the processes of industry and business alter their ways. Untrammelled individual freedom of action is nothing sacred or necessarily inviolate. All civilisation—with its infinite enrichment of life—involves more or less of it. But likewise, untrammelled individual industry and profit-getting are nothing sacred or necessarily inviolate. If modern conditions give to laissez-faire individual profit-getting a deleterious social effect—i. e., a narrow concentration of resources, and a complete impoverishment of the majority—then that form of industry and profit-getting, like unrestricted individual liberty, must go. The object of good government is not to fulfill catch slogans like "liberty" or "sound business", but simply to provide a decent distribution of existing resources, and to make the course of life conform to the normal needs and instincts of the population as best it can without wrecking the system and plunging everyone into greater misery than they could possibly suffer under the system's regulated conditions. Complete liberty of physical action, and unsupervised initiative in the prosecution of industry and accumulation of profit, are not likely to be possible under any conceivable future order of things—but on the other hand, a policy of sane conservation can retain a great many things which rash radicalism would discard. Perfect liberty of thought, opinion, scientific research, and artistic endeavour can certainly be salvaged in a truly civilised modern state, though Russia has repudiated them. Likewise, all amenities of living need not be destroyed merely because all types of people are not able to share in them. . . . . If all our inherited background be taken away, then what is there left to live for? That is my great quarrel with Soviet Russia. To my mind, the one irreducible minimum of personal independence worth fighting for till the last is *freedom of thought, opinion, research and art*. These are the things which really constitute human personality in its

finest sense, and without them all the boasted physical freedom of the savage means nothing. Grant them, and slavery cannot exist. But of course, there are *degrees* of physical freedom on which it is still necessary and desirable to insist. When we say that the utter liberty of the individual must be curtailed, we do not mean that his daily motions must be constantly restricted, or that during his entire life he must be liable to governmental drafting and transference to distant fields of industry, as under the Soviet programme. *These* extremes are indeed unnecessary and intolerable; for they make impossible a reasonable satisfaction of normal instincts, while it cannot be said that they are demanded by the existing and probable future conditions of industry. There must be moderation in all things, and we cannot interpret the necessary decrease in individual latitude as an excuse for the arbitrary and capricious restrictions of tyranny.

.....  
As for fish—ugh! Corpus Christi is one of the places in Texas which I certainly *shan't* visit when I get around your way! Some years ago Long and I attempted to explore the Fulton Fish Market section of New York—which is full of quaint scenes and buildings. Ordinarily I have about 50 times the vigour and endurance of young Belknap—but for once he had grandpa at a disadvantage! I don't know where I left the lunch I had eaten an hour previously—for I was too dizzy to read the street signs! In the end I managed to stagger out of the stench without actually losing consciousness—but when I regained the power of speech I fervently repeated the closing line of Hoyt's old Bowery song—"I'll never go there any more!" ...

... I *can't* get enough of ice cream, and frequently make a full meal of it (and nothing else) in summer. I like large doses of almost all sweets, though I *don't* like custards and am rather lukewarm toward puddings. Ice cream or pie—blueberry, mince or apple (with ice cream on it) forms my favourite desert. I don't care for tea but like coffee . . . . . and oddly, I think I like fried sausage about as well as any part of a hog. We could divide a porker between us with great justice and satisfaction—although I do like good boiled (never fried) ham. I notice that ham tends to be both better, and more frequently served, in the south than in the north. Whitehead *always* had some on hand as a staple—just as one ordinarily keeps stocked with butter, cheese, or bread. And as for turkey dinners—we are unanimous! Fortunately, I have been

able to surround several of these feasts during the present autumn and winter.

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—  
H P L

596. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 24, 1933

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... That cold spell—Dec. 15-17—was certainly vicious in the extreme. Of course I had to stay in (I can't safely go out under 20°), but with things ordered at the market that was no drawback.

..... Heard a fine lecture on Spinoza—whose contributions to philosophy I appreciate more & more as I get older—at Brown just before the cold spell. It was delivered under the auspices of the newly founded R. I. Philosophical Society—a thing I may join if I find membership worth the annual dollar—by Prof. Emeritus Walter G. Everett, a rather well known philosophical writer, even outside Providence. I shall attend later lectures in the course—all dealing with aspects of philosophy, & like the series I attended a year ago.

..... No one can write spontaneously *all* the time, & the wise poet simply rests on his oars when nothing suggests itself. It is the mediocre writer who insists on forcing himself to turn out a daily grist—a large part of which might much better have remained unwritten.

No—I couldn't write detective stories—I can't even read them any more, for they merely repeat artificial formulae. There is no life or sincerity in them. I disagree entirely with Miss Reese regarding modern fiction—for the fact is that the newer novels are vastly superior to the older ones in that they actually deal with real human traits & motives & conduct. A few, of course, show disproportion here & there; but for

the most part they are honest & straightforward—which Victorian "literature" never was. Of course a person saturated with the false taste of Victorian times, & reluctant to see life sincerely portrayed, would naturally balk at many phases of modern literature—but that's the fault of Victorian insincerity, not of modern literature. There is nothing to regret in the passing of Victorian hypocrisy & namby-pambyness. Basically, it is not so much life that has changed, as mere manners & standards of expression. And since a large part of these changes have been in the direction of greater honesty, I think there is much more to commend than to deplore about them. Of course, it is unfortunate that a certain amount of amenity & considerateness had to perish along with the unctuous hypocrisy, but in the long run I fancy the gain predominates. There *never was* any "sweet old natural way of life"—but merely a perfumed white-wash of false sentiment & convention plastered over a world of blind stumbling much like the present world in essentials. Many of the ideals by which things were judged were so false & empty that perpetual maladjustment & increased hypocrisy resulted; while the fatuous standard of polite delicacy gave rise to an insincere mode of expression which virtually nullified the merit of the prevailing artistic effort. The only advantageous features of the age were on the surface—a certain smoothing-out of appearances which made life pleasant for some types who either thought little or saw little of the world. All who thought deeply or analysed the texture of life were sickened & repelled by the falsity & shallowness of the prevailing attitude. Thus Samuel Butler wrote *The Way of All Flesh* in disgusted protest against the hollow state of things he saw around him. On a humbler plane, I myself was so disgusted with the simpering affectation of the Victorian age that I turned back to the 18th century with its rational outlook & instinctive candour. We over-value the Victorian age because it happened to be the last phase of the non-mechanised world. Of course, when we compare 1870 with 1933 we find in the former a security & repose which the latter lacks—yet the valuable thing lost is not the mock-refinement of 1870, but simply that permanent adjustment of race to environment which was common to 1570, 1670, 1770, & 1870. 1870 was so rotten with triviality & hollowness that I actually prefer 1933 to it. The *real* loss which mechanised chaos has brought is that perceived by contrasting 1770 with 1933. As for changes in one's thought & sympathies as time passes—that is a matter



for congratulation, not regret. It implies an intelligent mind assimilating new data & discarding fallacious perspectives in favour of perspectives closer to reality. Only a fool preserves the ignorance & gullibility of his infancy. The only important thing in life is honestly to grasp the real "is—or—isn't-ness" of the universe, while making the most of whatever available beauty may happen to exist in it. But nothing in all this is antagonistic to the production of poetry. The rhythms & harmonies of the visible world certainly don't depend on the discarded affectations of one insignificant bygone period!

..... The worst experience I ever had was losing my birthplace, & I dread the thought of the day when still worse circumstances may force me out of my present comfortable quarters—where I have all my old things around me. But even if I had to seek a cheaper habitat, I'd never give up accustomed furniture & accessories if I could help it. I'd rather live in a tumble-down stable with my lifelong-known possessions than in a luxurious hotel with unfamiliar things.

I recently heard an interesting reading—by a Brown professor—of the poetry of James Stephens & Walter de la Mare. It is one of a series—in which Robert Hillyer will read from his own work next Sunday. Later Leonard Bacon & the celebrated T. S. Eliot will be heard in person. ....

With every good wish, & renewed thanks for holiday cards, anthology, Carillon, newspaper cuttings, &c., I remain

Yr most oblig'd & obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

597. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Tenbarnes—  
Jany. 26, 1933

Inspir'd Imperator of Investigative Ingenuity:—

.....  
As for economy—I may yet beat the records of both your early self and old Sunrise Walker. At Clinton street I occasionally got fodder down to 70¢ per week, although my ignorance of effective laundry

methods (for my education in really drastick budgetary limitation did not begin till Jany. 1, 1925) annull'd the good effects of this and brought my bills up to a most unfortunate total. Now my food bill is from two to three dollars weekly, while my laundry has sunk to not more than a dollar a month—less than it used to be per week! You ought to see Grandpa tackle a shirt, or even a soft collar! I do the latter with a toothbrush—which will get off 0.8 of the grime—and can get a pseudo-iron'd effect from flat drying. I've also told you of my self-barbering with the device (to hitch on to a Gillette) purchased in 1929 for one dollar. The longer I use it, the better sort of an haircut I can give myself—piecing out with scissors for the graduations around the back of the neck. It is said that the Belgian stratospherist Prof. Piccard cuts his own hair—but when I look at the result in newspaper portraits I feel I am the greater artist! Of course, some of the difference may be due to the dollar machine—but even allowing for that, I have a feeling that M. Auguste's tonsorial taste isn't all it might be. But then—what a rotten stratospherist I'd make!

As for a list of ancestral names—here's the New England dope: Phillips, Place, Rathbone, Whipple, Casey, Perkins, Mathewson, Dyer, Wilcox, Godfrey, Willard, Fish, Ellis, Hazard, Safford, Clemence, Malavery, Dodge, Brownell, West, Newman, Field, Gater.

My interest grows languid and academic as names recede toward the Domesday Book or pre-Renaissance oblivion, since the amount of any one strain of blood I may inherit from such a date is virtually negligible. So long as it isn't Negro or australoid, I don't kick. I hate the Middle Ages so, that I don't take much satisfaction in establishing a linkage with them. If I could only get back to *classical antiquity*, that would be another matter. In imagination I permit myself to fancy that some of the Welshmen in my line may be descended from *Roman* officers in the legions of Gn. Julius Agricola, P. Ostorius Scapula, Q. Lollius Urbicus, and other conquerors or rulers of the Province of Britannia. S. P. Q. R.! God Save the King! Vivant Roma atque Britannia, Imperatrices Mundi and Lucus Orbis Terrarum! The She-Wolf and the Lion—aeternal and unassailable!

.....  
Yr. obt. Servt.—  
Theobaldus

598. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 28, 1933

Dear Jehvish-Bi:—

..... I think *The Yellow Sign* is the most fascinating product of Chambers's pen, & altogether one of the greatest weird tales ever written. The brooding, gathering atmosphere is actually tremendous. I must read it again & see how it strikes me after many years. *The Harbour Master* gave me quite a wallop in 1926, when I read it—although I did not care for the rest of the volume. I liked *The Green Wildebeest*, & have it noted down for mention in any future edition of my article. By the way—my library has received some accessions lately, one of them very notable. This latter was a Christmas gift from W. Paul Cook, & formed a remnant of his shattered library—nothing less than that famous & now out-of-print Gothic novel by Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth, the Wanderer*, in 3 volumes. I had been trying to get hold of this item for years, & you can imagine how Cook's gift virtually bowled me over! Another gift was the fairly recent scientific novel *The World Below*, by S. Fowler Wright, wherein a man is projected into the world of 500,000 years ahead—finding furry amphibians & human giants the dominant races. A third item I picked up myself as a remainder for 79¢—that magnificent phantasy *The Worm Ouroboros*, by E. R. Eddison.

..... Your dramatic criticisms, as usual, sound highly interesting & intelligent—I feel sure that you'll be doing such things for the press some day. My only sight of the Lunt duo was in 1924, in the over-advertised & rather insipid eschatological sketch entitled *Outward Bound*—to which I was taken by the late Houdini. This Coward person surely seems to be quite a figure. I note the cinema observations—this time from a less remote distance, since the Longs dragged me to several shows as they usually do .... the first shows I've seen since they similarly dragged me last June. The performances were good, bad, &

indifferent; & included the following items: *Strange Interlude* (excellent), *A Farewell to Arms* (about as you say), *Red Dawn* (a Russian revolutionary film which appears to ignore the Kerensky preface to the real disaster), *Goono-Goono* (acted by natives of the isle of Bali—good as geography, but nothing much as a drama), *Trouble in Paradise* (very fair comedy), *Three On a Match* (routine stuff), *The Crusader* (even worse), & *Blame the Woman* (which I largely slept through). Thus ends my cinematic experience till Belknap gets hold of me again, or till something really notable hits town at a time when my lethargy is less dense than usual.

Since my return home I've been floundering in a tumult of accumulated tasks—for there were awaiting me 22 letters, 2 revision jobs, & a formidable stack of papers & periodicals. In a short time I hope to get at the job of collaborating with E. Hoffmann Price on *The Silver Key* sequel—though the effort may come to nothing. ....

Yr most obt Grandsire—  
E'ch-Pi-El.

599. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Jany. 30, 1933

Dear A. W.:—

Well—I have read the revised and repropotioned *Evening in Spring*, and believe that you have made a tremendous improvement over any of the original fragments and sections now embodied in it. It certainly is a natural and inevitable organic whole—explanation, general external-world background, specific local background, and finally objective events—yet leaves the way fully open for the later units of the reminiscent cycle. The proportion allotted to backgrounds is almost uniquely large, yet I do not feel that any competent critic could term it excessive or tedious. The feeling of reality and vitality never flags—and one can understand the part played by all the recorded impressions and influences in the shaping of the central figure. That figure itself is an unmistakably definite personality—with an aura of authenticity apparent even to one who, like myself, is as utterly antipodal to it in moods and interests and memories as any imaginative and landscape-loving individual well can be. If this production isn't *literature*, I'll cheerfully eat



my hat! It is certainly the most substantial thing that any member of the *W.T.* gang has yet turned out—and I feel sure that this view will be echoed by Price despite his devotion to the most opposite types of objective writing. . . .

Enclosed is the *Witch-House*—although I'm afraid it is hardly worth copying. It almost amuses me to reflect that I once thought I was on the road toward becoming able to write stories! Good luck with *Hastur*\*\*—but don't use any word sounding like "Betelgeuse" to represent a *primal* name of that distant sun (or to represent the name used by the denizens of any of its hypothetical planets) since this name is an Arabic product of the Middle Ages, and signifies "the armpit (or shoulder) of the giant (or central one)"—*Ibt al Jauzah*—Orion having been known as *Al Jauzah* to the astronomers of the Saracenic Caliphate—who did so much to advance the science. Since the word "Betelgeuse" is so wholly and recognisably a terrestrial coinage, with a known terrestrial etymology, it becomes necessary to have something totally dissimilar if we are to represent a non-terrestrial (or pre-Arabic terrestrial) term. In the *Necronomicon*, Abdul Alhazred would no doubt have used both the primal name—let us say *Glyu-ubo* or something of the sort—and the new Arabic word *Ibt al Jauzah* (Betelgeuse) which the astronomers around him were beginning to evolve. The point is that one can't devise a prototype-name for Betelgeuse, since the origin of the latter is known. From what you say—and if it's anything like *Wind Walker*—the new tale bids fair to be a notable production. I shall be eagerly on the lookout for it. . . .

Best wishes—Yr. oblig'd and obt. grandsire,  
HP

600. TO JAMES F. MORTON

January over, Thank Yuggoth!, 1933  
Fulgent Finial of Family Fact-Finding:—

. . . I'm really accumulating a surprising charity library—*six* new volumes (all weird anthologies) from Derleth the other day—discards

\*\* *The Return of Hastur*, written to completion in April 1937, taken by Wright for *WT* in February 1938.—August Derleth

from his collection. One of them (Bohun Lynch's *Best Ghost Stories*) contains Blackwood's *Willows*—hence ecstatic rejoicings on my part. By the way—you're the guy who originally brought Algernon to my notice; a circumstance which earns you my immortal gratitude.

And speaking of charity—these lines are incised with the stylus of another old controversy-pal of yours . . . . none other than Ernie Edkins of the Halcyon Age. I happened to be discussing fountain-pen woes with him some time ago—mentioning that I can never get a pen to flow freely enough—when lo! he shot me this massive Parker, which he says he can't use because it's *too* free-flowing for him. For *me* the feed is exactly right—but the point is too damn stubby. I may try to see about changing the point—if it can be done without jazzing up the feed. This is the second charity pen I've had—good old Moe having given me a Conklin (left on a desk in his classroom and never claimed) in 1923, when I lost my 1906 Waterman amidst the sands of Marblehead. Easy come, easy go. In March 1926 I lent it to Loveman, and when I made inquiries after returning home from the pest zone in April he couldn't seem to find it. I wonder who'll lose this Parker for me? If all Parkers feed like this, I think I'll shift my loyalty from Watermans. Good old Edkins!

At this point the charity Parker ran dry. Now I'm going to see how it works with Waterman's ink—which I hope won't show any commercial jealousy. This is a bit thinner than the Carter's Kongo Black which (sensible of the proper servile functions of Africk blackness) I've been using since last September. Edkins uses Sheaffer's Skrip (so does my aunt)—which is probably the best of all, although it costs more than the dime-per-2 oz.-bottle Waterman and Kongo. Economy always bulks large on the Theobald programme.

Yrs. for Hitler and Mussolini and Araki—  
Theobaldus

601. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

Tenbarnes—  
Feb. 8, 1933

Dear Wright:—

I have just had a letter from Harry Bates—late editor of the defunct *Strange and Astounding*, and now in Clearwater, Fla., writing a play—which sheds much light on the details of good old Canevin's passing. Clearwater lies between Dunedin and St. Petersburg, and Bates has been in touch with Whitehead's father and friends. On account of your interest in H. S., and your long connection with him, I fancy you will be eager to hear the melancholy particulars.

It seems that during the autumn of 1932 H. S.'s cousin from the north was replaced by the bright little "cracker" boy C. J. Fletcher (whom he had had before—in 1930) as secretary and general factotum. On the Sunday before his death—Nov. 20—he complained of what he termed a "general malaise"—*not* connected with his long-afflicted stomach. His friend Miss M. I. Starr (a middle-aged lady who, during my 1931 visit, lent him the use of her car) was rather worried, and told young Fletcher to watch him carefully and telephone her if anything alarming developed. Late that night the boy heard a thud—as of someone falling—in Whitehead's room, and found H. S. in a queer and disturbing condition—partly deprived of speech. He telephoned Miss Starr, and she went over—finding H. S. semi-conscious. She then telephoned Dr. Mease (prop. of the Dunedin Sanatorium, and H. S.'s regular physician), who came at once and sent for two other doctors. They diagnosed the case as concussion of the brain caused by a fall. Before morning old Mr. Whitehead was notified and rushed up from St. Petersburg. H. S. was still semi-conscious, recognised his father, raised an arm, smiled, and said "My daddy." Those were his last words. From then until the end the doctors kept him under opiates. Fletcher, Dr. Mease, Miss Starr, Mr. Whitehead, and others were on hand and awake most of the time. Death came early and imperceptibly on the morning of Wednesday the 23d. It is clear that H. S. never had a chance to read my reply to his last letter.

H. S. was feeling *unusually well* until Sunday, Nov. 20, hence I doubt if the old gastric trouble was really the *direct* cause of death. To me it looks like a malignly tragic *accident*—the fall in the night; which, though doubtless caused by the general weakness resulting from the old trouble, might easily have not occurred. It seems that shortly before his death H. S. had had all his books and household effects shipped down from the north, where for years they had been in storage. He had also just finished a new sun porch on the roof of his new home in Pasadena Drive. It is tragic that he could not have lived to enjoy these things.

Old Mr. Whitehead (now eighty-five), Bates says, is visibly failing under the shock—although he carries on with outward cheerfulness—the hereditary Canevin stamina. He is quite deaf, and of late his eyes have been developing cataracts. H. S.'s body has been placed temporarily in a St. Petersburg mausoleum, and Mr. Whitehead plans later to unite all the family dust by having Mrs. Whitehead's remains brought south and arranging for three graves (including his own) side by side in St. Petersburg cemetery—father, mother, and only child. Thus good old Canevin will rest under the semi-tropical sky he loved so well, and beside the parents to whom he was so warmly and undeviatingly devoted.

Yrs. most sincerely,  
H. P. L.

602. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Feb. 15, 1933

Dear Malik:—

I thought the Comte d'Erlette's opus would give you quite a reaction! What the kid has done is to get at those subtle, unheeded impressions which we take for granted when they come, but which really contain so much of the universal that they pack a tremendous symbolic wallop when they crop out in later years. It's no easy job to single out such things and serve them up in such a way that they evoke parallel personal impressions in the minds of myriad readers—but I think M. Auguste-Guillaume has done it . . . just as Marcel Proust did it. And that is art. D'Erlette has mastered the mechanism, as it were, of the experience-savouring and experience-recalling processes—he knows the right things to select, and the right way and tempo in which to put them across. The



reader, swept into the rhythm of these processes, finds that rhythm eventually at work in his own head—utilising his own-experience-material instead of the author's. My own nature and childhood differ diametrically from d'Erlette's, and yet his methods cause the early years and their impressions to come back vividly to me. I, though, find the nature sections—or in general, the sections devoted to broad impersonal impressions of landscape, architecture, atmospheric effects, etc.—far more vivid than those dealing with personalities and human relationships. This, because I have always been tremendously sensitive to the *general visual scene*—external, objective, mysterious and full of potential cosmic suggestion—while relatively indifferent to people. I can never feel the poignancy of human affairs as keenly as I can feel the poignancy of dim vistas suggesting wonders of time, space, and the unknown on a stupendous and non-human scale—so that some of Steve's effusiveness and sentimentality about people seems to me like downright slobbering. However, I know opposite types well enough to appreciate the skill and fidelity of all d'Erlette's delineations—and consequently to admire the artistry inherent in them. The little rascal certainly has the real stuff! The rural side gets under my skin because I always *knew* the ancient fields and hills and groves even though a city dweller. The house where I was born and grew up (about a mile southeast of 10 Barnes) was near the edge of the built-up streets when I was very small, and it was only a stone's throw to the rolling, stone-walled meadows, trim white farmhouses, rambling barns and byres, gnarled old orchards, dim twilight woods, and ravine-pierced river-bluffs of primitive colonial New-England. Like d'Erlette, I wandered fascinatedly through that mystical, flower-fragrant elder world and formed all sorts of imaginative impressions from it—but there the resemblance ends. For while he was an *intrinsic* naturalist like Wordsworth—sensuously content with the visible and unexplained beauty around him—I was the exact opposite; a confirmed and inveterate *associationist* who constantly linked the lovely countryside with everything in the past which folklore and reading had brought to me. I peopled the landscape with the gods, fawns, and dryads of antique Hellas, or with the castles and witch-cottages of fairy lore—or else dreamed them back into their own past and lived fancifully in bygone centuries. I twisted all reality to conform to what I had been reading—often making Old England's gnarled oaks out of New England's maples, and so on. Today the built-up city has swal-

lowed a great part of my childhood countryside though some of the choicest bits are providentially saved by being parts of the Metropolitan Park System. Thus I can still wander along the ancient wooded river-bank (as I do, with black bag full of reading and writing matter, each pleasant summer afternoon) and find nothing changed since my earliest infancy. Like d'Erlette, I was also sensitive to the mystery-fraught streets and huddled roofs of the town, and often took rambles in unfamiliar sections for the sake of bizarre atmospheric and architectural effects—ancient gables and chimneys under varied conditions of light and mist, etc. I always sought the *oldest* sections, where centuries of continuous life had left the most deposits, and thus formed my lifelong love for colonial houses and vistas—Vieux Carré stuff. This, of course, d'Erlette could never get in his village—although he would probably have been rhapsodic about Old Providence. Good old Providence—there is no other town quite like it! Though a centre of hundreds of thousands, it has kept an archaic, village-like quality which will never die, and which was even more marked in my youth than now. The town lies at the head of the bay, with the flat business section stretching westward on largely "made" land whilst the residence district climbs an almost perpendicular and incredibly picturesque hill just east of the shore line. The steepness of this hill (on whose crest I now dwell) has defied the spread of commerce and change, so that its narrow lanes, ancient steeples, rows of fanlighted doorways and railed double flights of steps, huddled gables, courtyard archways, walled gardens, occasional bits of actual grass-grown lane and farmyard, and countless other details, remain to a surprising extent as they were in the middle 18th century—before most of the houses in New Orleans' Vieux Carré were built. There is a 1761 colony-house, a 1770 college edifice, a 1769 schoolhouse, a 1763 newspaper office, a 1775 church, a 1773 market house, and so on . . . and so on . . . And up to a recent time (curse the vandalism which destroyed the best part of it as recently as 1929) the ancient waterfront with slant-roofed brick warehouses and lanes of gambrel-roofed shops and pillared taverns was virtually the same as in the days of the African-Caribbean "triangular trade" (rum, Negroes, and molasses) and the great East-India brigs. Then, too, from most points along the hill crest there is a breath-taking view of the outspread roofs and spires and domes of the westward-stretching lower town—a view reaching even to the dim violet hills of the country beyond . . .

the country whence many of my ancestors came. At sunset this vista is past description—the marble dome of the State House, the Gothic tower of St. Patrick's, and the distant spires of Federal Hill against the flaming, mysterious west—and then the cryptic twilight, with the violet of the far hills creeping eastward to engulf the whole drowsy valley, and little specks of light leaping out one by one till the expanded sea of roofs is one titanic constellation . . . . Great stuff! And even more magical now that we have tall buildings (15, 16, 26 stories) to light up and suggest enchanted cliff cities of Dunsanian mystery. Good old Providence! . . . . My birthplace—at the edge of the town in the 90's—is of course in a solidly Victorian neighbourhood—which made the strongly contrasted ancient hill section doubly fascinating to me in infancy. There was even a kind of faint, subtle *terror* mixed with the fascination, as if the ancient hill represented something obscurely *underlying and eternal*, whilst the newer sections represented a kind of flimsy dream out of which one might easily awake. I *still* get this sensation at times. The hill and its centuried gables seemed to me one with the ancient fields and farms and forests that stretched eastward to the river.

Pardon the rambling—but that's the way *Evening in Spring* sets one off. I also felt that kinship with *ancestors*, rather than the generation just preceding, which d'Erlette points out. My maternal grandfather—born in 1833—and his generation seemed much closer to me than the generation of my parents, uncles, and aunts, born around the '60's; while my forebears in the 18th century (periwigged Devonshire squires and rural Anglican vicars on my father's side, and New-England planters on my mother's side) seemed closest of all. That sense of immediate personal kinship with the 18th century—its costume, architecture, literary style, thought, etc.—has never left me or even diminished. It's that which sends me rambling around the country looking for Vieux Carré's and Charlesons and Natchezes and Salems and Annapolises and Quebecs!

Well—I tried once to put my imaginative reactions to old Providence into a story, but don't think I succeeded very well. It was a 150-page novelette—*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (whose imaginary home was the old haunted Halsey mansion around the corner from here)—which I wrote in the winter of 1926-27, but which I could never get the energy to type. Today little Barlow has offered to type it for me in

exchange for the ms., but I'm not sure that it's good enough to save. I must trot it out and look it over.

Getting back to the theme—I don't believe the residue of *Evening in Spring* will disappoint you. It's solid material—and if I'm any prophet, young Comte d'Erlette will be one of the solid and recognised writers of the next decade.

What you say of your new tale, and of the Pushkara-Plaksha-Kusha-Shâlmali-Mt. Wern-Senzar-Dzyan-Shamballah myth-cycle which you have dug up, interests me to fever heat; and I am tempted to overwhelm you with questions as to the source, provenance, general bearings, and bibliography of all this unknown legendry. Where did you find it? How can one get hold of it? What nation or region developed it? Why isn't it mentioned in ordinary works on comparative folklore? What—if any—special cult (like the theosophists, who have concocted a picturesque tradition of Atlanteo-Lemurian elder world stuff, well summarised in a book by W. Scott-Elliott) cherishes it? For gawd's sake, yes—send along those notes, and I'm sure that Klarkash-Ton, High-Priest of Tsathoggua, would (unless he knows about the cycle in question) appreciate them as keenly as I. Incidentally—Klarkash-Ton tells me that his Semitic oracle de Casseres never heard of *Zemargad*. Tough luck! But the hint so strongly appeals to High-Priest Klarkash that he is going to use the name *Zemargad*—in conjunction with more synthetic nomenclature—in his new and hellish conception, *The Infernal Star*. Meanwhile, as I said before, I'm quite on edge about that Dzyan-Shamballah stuff. The cosmic scope of it—Lords of Venus, and all that—sounds so especially and emphatically in my line!

As for astrology—since I have always been a devotee of the real science of *astronomy*, which takes all the ground from under the unreal and merely apparent celestial arrangements on which astrological predictions are based, I have had too great a contempt for the art to take much interest in it—except when refuting its puerile claims. Back in 1914 I conducted a heavy newspaper campaign against a local defender of astrology, and in 1926 I read quite a few astrological books (since largely forgotten) in order to ghost-write a thorough and systematic exposé of the fake science for no less notable a client than the late Houdini. That comprises the sum of my astrological knowledge—the casting of horoscopes never having been included among my ambitions.



If I ever employ any astrological lore in stories, I shall most gratefully call on you for realistic detail.

Best wishes—

Abdul Alhazred

# 603. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Feb. 16, 1933

Dear Wright:—

Yours of the 13th arrived just after I had dropped you a card in reply to your earlier note. So little Augie has been showing Grandpa's stories, eh? Quite a boy!

Yes—if you want to use the *Witch House*, go ahead. Surely \$140 is as much as can be expected in these times. As for radio dramatisation rights—I really think an author ought to be able to have at least a censorship of anything which goes out under his name—for what a popular dialogue-arranger could do to the atmosphere and artistic integrity of a seriously written story is appalling to contemplate! Indeed, it is not likely that *any* really finely wrought weird story—where so much depends on mood, and on nuances of description—could be changed to a drama without irreparable cheapening and the loss of all that gave it power. Of course, weird drama *can* be written—when the author starts out *from the first* to utilise the dramatic form. Dunsany's *Gods of the Mountain* and *Night at an Inn* are typical specimens. But when a thing is written *as a story*, it will fare best by staying that way. What the public consider "weirdness" in drama is rather pitiful or absurd—according to one's perspective. As a thorough soporific I recommend the average popularly "horrible" play or cinema or radio dialogue. They are all the same—flat, hackneyed, synthetic, essentially atmosphereless jumbles of conventional shrieks and mutterings and superficial, mechanical situations. *The Bat* made me drowse back in the early 1920's—and last year an alleged *Frankenstein* on the screen *would* have made me drowse had not a posthumous sympathy for poor Mrs. Shelley made me see red instead. Ugh! And the screen *Dracula* in 1931—I saw the beginning of that in Miami, Fla.—but couldn't bear to watch it drag

to its full term of dreariness, hence walked out into the fragrant tropic moonlight!

Of course, as you say, the dramatisation of my *Witch House* is very unlikely; but on the whole, if it's all the same to you, I wouldn't mind seeing it protected against the dialoguer's unconscious caricaturing. You may recall that I wouldn't contribute to *Strange Tales* because Bates couldn't guarantee me immunity from the copy-slasher's shears and blue pencil.

So I fancy that, on general principles, it would be simplest to sell First N. A. serial rights only. I hope that doesn't sound too fussy—but when I reflect on how much the force of any carefully written story depends on atmospheric effects peculiar to the *original wording*, I really feel that demands for integrity of form are justified . . . even in instances of second presentation.

Price is getting me to attempt collaboration on a sequel to *The Silver Key*, involving some of his dimensional theories. If I can't work up the proper synthesis, I may turn the job over to Klarkash-Ton.

Yrs. most cordially—  
H. P. L.

# 604. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Shores of the Black Lake T'lai,  
Time of the Moonless Tide and  
the Rising of ———.  
Feby. 18, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Price has dug up another cycle of actual folklore involving an allegedly primordial thing called *The Book of Dzian*, which is supposed to contain all sorts of secrets of the Elder World before the sinking of Kusha (Atlantis) and Shālmali (Lemuria). It is kept at the Holy City of Shamballah, and is regarded as the oldest book in the world—its language being *Senzar* (ancestor of Sanscrit), which was brought to earth 18,000,000 years ago by the Lords of Venus. I don't know where E. Hoffmann got hold of this stuff, but it sounds damn good. . .

Yrs. for the Pnakotic Secrets—  
E'ch-Pi-El.

605. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

Feby. 27, 1933

Dear Morse:—

By the way—since you have such a charitable opinion of my fictional attempts, you may be pleased to hear that my last story—*The Dreams in the Witch-House*, written exactly a year ago—will appear during the present twelvemonth in *Weird Tales*. I had become disgusted with the whole business, but Derleth (to whom it was lent) happened to show this story to Editor Wright. The latter asked if he might purchase it for \$140.00, and I decided (sorely needing the tangible return) to let him have it—even though it most emphatically fails to satisfy me. Wright asked for radio dramatisation rights, but I set my foot down there. I shall never permit anything bearing my signature to be banalised and vulgarised into the kind of flat infantile twaddle which passes for "horror tales" amongst radio and cinema audiences!

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

606. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Mar. 2, 1933

Dear Malik:—

.....  
Glad you're succumbing to the unique and haunting charm of *Ouroboros*. There is nothing else quite like it—even by the same author. It weaves its own atmosphere, and lays down its own laws of reality. At first one tends to rebel at the laying of the scene in *Mercury* without any attempt to depict conditions peculiar to that planet and alien to the earth (if we except the rather whimsical *horus* of the population), but gradually we come to accept or forget the gesture—taking the whole

thing in the spirit of an enthralling fireside tale about it—its naiveté, absence of Cabellian snickers, and subordination of the obtrusive social satire which spoils the charm of so many kindred phantasies. . .

.....

Blessings of the Prophet—  
Abdul Alhazred

607. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Tenbarnes—  
March 24, 1933

Son:—

..... I claim, and I think not without reason, that the extreme force of any emotion can very sensibly be blunted by a careful examination of all the trivial and fortuitous factors which go into its composition. More than one determin'd person has very successfully and advantageously modify'd his character by the rational and deliberate toning down of emotional predispositions which warr'd against balance, tranquillity, and social adjustment. This, indeed, I know from many concrete and verifiable cases—not excluding my own, wherein a tendency toward quick and violent anger, highly inimical to urbanity, has been vastly diminish'd since the hot-temper'd days of my youth. The important thing to fix in mind is *that no emotion is really worth anything in itself*. All that is of value is the pleasing *balance* brought about by the harmonious *correlation* of the various emotions. The emotions themselves are simply existing forces—not to be valued or worshipp'd in themselves, but simply to be accepted as natural phenomena and manag'd to the greatest advantage of the whole personality. The *value* of a feeling depends altogether upon its adjustment to the fabrick compos'd of all the other feelings.

.....

Yr. most obt. Servt.,  
Grandpa.



608. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
March 24, 1933

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

..... As for phrases—I fancy the real point is that in youth one overstresses such things, while in maturity one demands the presence of something behind them. That demand by no means prevents one from still appreciating good language, & preferring it when other things are equal. As for Milton—I don't see how you ... can argue away the distinctive charm of a large part of his work. He has the power of evoking unlimited images for persons of active imagination, & no amount of academic theory can explain that away. As for the necessary accomplishments of a young gentleman—I fancy I'm worse than you, for I don't play bridge. That, though, wasn't such a "necessity" when I was young . . . . but I doubt if I'd have bothered with it in any case. I'm ahead of you on one point, though—I loved firearms, & could scarcely count the endless succession of guns & pistols I've owned. I wish even now that I hadn't given away my last Remington. As it is, I possess only an ancestral & unshootable flintlock musket.

..... The introduction of the Whitehead memorial page in *W. T.* was at the suggestion of E. Hoffmann Price. Glad you liked it—since I wrote it myself. My original text was longer, giving it more of a personal description & tribute, but Wright cut it down for space reasons. . . . . Galsworthy, I think, will survive. His style at times halts one, but the substance is there. I don't mind the "coldness" & "impersonality"—in fact, I think that these may be marks of the detachment & objectivity which every great novelist must have. Did 7½ pages of *The Silver Key* sequel when a flood of revision swamped me & stalled the job. I'm having to override Price altogether in style—it will be my prose throughout unless he proposes later changes. His mathematical ideas, however, will be retained. But gawd knows when I'll ever be able to continue the damn Thing!



Not so hot . . . not so hot! It takes more than I've got to pull across the picture of desolation inherent in the original idea of the Rastad bath! And this reminds me that I feel tremendously complimented by your suggestion that I attempt a frontispiece for "The Colour out of Space"! Ah, me—could that I could! I have always envied authors who can illustrate their own tales—putting into circulation exactly what they have in mind instead of depending on the routine work of the careless, uninspired hand of a sympathetic or wage-slave illustrator—but have scarcely hoped to be able to produce anything suitable myself. Your suggestion tempted me strongly, even though I would like to have the book sketched with a crude sketch, likely to detract from the value of the whole undertaking. I may try some experimenting & let you see what you think of the results. However, even if I secured a half-decent pictorial effect, I'm afraid that it would be of a sort hard to reproduce in a cut for printing—since I'm especially poor at getting effects with few lines, such as printers generally desire. I seem to have to build a new up with many fine lines & dots in order to make it look even half like anything. However—we'll see. If by any chance I happen on any effect that seems worth trying, I'll send it along for your opinion. But I'm under no illusions as to the ineptitude of my unschooled pictorial blunderings!

Some good exhibitions & lectures recently at the local art museum—including one of the greatest temporary groupings of modern Spanish painting ever housed under one roof—Zuloaga, Sorolla, & all the other contemporary Spaniards. A series of lectures with lantern slides gave necessary data on the background of Spanish art as a whole & on the Italian, Flemish, & French sources of that art. I'm lucky to have this museum as my neighbor—it is in that beautiful St. of which you've heard so much . . . just down half a block & around the corner from 66 College.

Well—I sure have covered a lot of paper, & I trust you can pardon my somewhat senile rambling! Hope you'll find the enclosed interesting—and that you will let Rinal see all of them. Best regards to you both. Yours most cordially & sincerely—H. Lovecraft

Lovecraft's conception of the blasted heath from *The Colour out of Space*, drawn in a 1934 letter to F. Lee Baldwin

The Elder Pharos

Poem by H P Lovecraft. Music by Harold Farnese Op. 2, no. 2.

from Leng where

rock-y peaks climb bleak and bare Un-der cold stars ob-scure to human sight

There shoots at dusk a sin-gle beam of light Whose far blue rays make shepherds whine

Copyrighted 1932 by H. S. Farnese

Title page from *The Elder Pharos* sonnet by H. P. Lovecraft  
as set to music by Harold S. Farnese

..... Last month I attended a reading by the enigmatical & celebrated T. S. Eliot—interesting if not quite explicable. It reminded me of the discussions of *The Waste Land* which our gang used to conduct a decade ago. I wrote a parody which was printed in the newspaper—but which sounds sadly flat today, now that the heat of combat has subsided. Eliot reads well—& has picked up quite a British accent in latter years. He is now 45, & looks every inch of it. .... unlike the pictures commonly in circulation.

A fortnight ago one of my jobs took me to Hartford to help a client conduct some research at the Athenaeum there. It was my second visit to the town—which is, as I probably mentioned, not very interesting or distinctive except for the old Bulfinch state house & the centre church burying ground. This time, however, I had an opportunity to see the ancient suburbs of Farmington & Wethersfield—& I certainly was not disappointed. Farmington is one of the most beautiful villages in the U. S.—situated in a rolling countryside full of picturesque vistas, & shaded by a magnificent plenitude of ancient elms. The houses are predominantly of the 18th century, with occasional earlier specimens—one is of about 1650, with overhanging second story. The inn where I stopped is a rambling, composite structure, with no wing newer than 1790, & with a central nucleus dating back to 1638, the year of Farmington's settlement. The church, a white steepled affair of typical Novanglian pattern, was built in 1771. Wethersfield is also full of interest, though of vastly different aspect. It lies in a flat region, & has an immensely wide village common shaded by the largest elms east of the Rocky Mountains. There are many fine old colonial mansions, bearing the distinctive marks of Connecticut Valley architecture. In one of them Gens. Washington & Rochambeau planned the battle of Yorktown in 1781. The steepled brick church dates from 1763, it being then considered the finest church in New England outside Boston. It was in Wethersfield that the Pequot War started in 1637. ....

Yr obt grandsire  
E'ch-Pi-El



609. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Cold, Sleety, and with a slush of  
new-fallen but melting snow on the  
ground—but the First Day of Spring!  
Mar. 24, 1933

Dear Malik:—

Just before the recent avalanche of work I tackled the *Silver Key* sequel, and produced 7½ pages of collaborated text—setting the scene at a meeting of Carter's executors in New Orleans and carrying the Stranger's narrative as far as Carter's entrance to the inner cave and figurative application of the key to the vague suggestion of a door at the farther end. In these pages I have, I think, ironed out all the discrepancies betwixt the sequel and the original story, and paved the way for the adequately motivated development of the rest. You may complain that I've been rather ruthless in making changes—but the great necessity was to reconcile the thing with what cannot be altered because of being in print. And anyway, you have a subsequent chance to remove anything which you don't like. The later parts—involving mathematical concepts, etc.—will adhere more closely to your plan—although with your permission I may give Carter's ultra-dimensional experiences a more abstract and nebulous cast than in your ms. We shall see. I plan to continue as soon as I can get enough time to give the matter the unhurried attention it deserves.

Yes—I can certainly use that \$140 when it gets my way! Satrap Pharnabazus says the *Witch House* will be in the issue out July 1st—dated July, since a slowing-up process (May out Apr. 15, June out June 1) is to bring actual and nominal dates into coalescence at last. He also plans to reprint *The Festival* sometime during the coming months. As for trying more stuff on *W. T.*—the trouble with catering to the cheap public is that it actually injures my ability to write decent stuff. Some can get away with it—accommodating their style to the herd for the nonce and then returning to serious effort—but I haven't that degree of cleverness and adaptability. Of course, many seriously intended tales might by chance strike King Pharnaces in the right way—

and I would certainly send him any which I thought might be of this kind. Moreover—in case of a future clear demonstration of failure to produce serious work . . . a demonstration that I absolutely lack the capacity to achieve authentic artistic expression . . . I dare say I might in the course of time lapse back into the habit of grinding out tales suited to my own grade of appreciation—whatever that is—which (like my existing earlier attempts) might occasionally find a place in Pharaoh Phon-Suth's polite and elegant repository. I am not blind to the fact that I may be wholly unsuited to the writing of really substantial material—but I want to give myself a chance, free from the deleterious influence of cheap models, before accepting such a verdict as final. During the past year I have written nothing at all, so heavy have been the other demands on my time and energy. I appreciate very powerfully, by the way, your flattering exhortations to renewed composition. If I do start in again shortly, it will undoubtedly be due largely to such encouragement.

. . . That imaginative impulse you received from the casual juvenile reading of lines about *Afrasiab* in an advertisement is a good example of the vista-awaking and association-forming power of apparently trivial stimuli. It has a double interest for me, inasmuch as it closely parallels a youthful mystery of my own, also involving the name of *Afrasiab*. You doubtless recall the closing passage of Poe's *Premature Burial*—where, after an allusion to *Carathis* which baffled me till I had read *Vathek*, there occurs the tenebrous final simile:

" . . . but, like the Demons in whose company *Afrasiab* made his voyage down the Oxus, they must sleep, or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber, or we perish."

Now that image of *Afrasiab* sailing down the mysterious Oxus (a cryptic stream whose imaginative associations always fascinated me) on an accursed vessel full of sleeping daemons—ineffable nighted things—held for me a macabre terror of peculiar intensity; a terror all the acuter because I could not trace the allusion to any source. I wove all sorts of hideously fanciful images about that voyage, and made obscure references to it in many of my juvenile tales. At first, the name of *Carathis* was woven into the mystery, but that faded when I found it in *Vathek*. *Afrasiab* and his daemons remained the tough nut, and for

a while I thought they must be derived from some version of the *Arabian Nights* more ample than any I had seen. Only after years did I find out somehow that Afrasiab came from Firdousi's great Persian epic—some article or commentary on which no doubt fell into Poe's resourceful hands. (He was a great boy for second-hand erudition, ransacking the scholarly notes to *Vathek*, *Lalla Rookh*, etc.) But I have not yet succeeded in finding any translation of the *Shah-Namah*, hence am still ignorant of Afrasiab's frightful adventure with the daemons. I must look up more material from Sir Wm. Jones some day.

Yrs. in the praise of Allah the Compassionate—  
Abdul Alhazred

Later—March 27

As for my criticism of the Balkis opening—I said at the outset that I realised the intentional nature of the skeletonic style, and that my remarks could not be taken as a businessman's criticism of a purely business job. . . . There's nothing "academic" in this. I simply couldn't get interested in a bald succession of flat statements whose astonishing content was belied by the casual, cheerful atmosphere. I read on because I knew that an E.H.P. story *must* contain something good farther along . . . . but had it been a stranger's tale my interest might not have taken me to the place where the *real story* gets under way. . . . What is there to give any sense of life—any sense that something besides a cool catalogue of impossible, irrelevant, gratuitous, and doubtfully interesting assertions is being presented—when a tale opens, in effect, like this?

"*Sacrebleu!*" cried de Grandin, "the ghost, it is here! Name of a little blue pig, Friend Trowbridge!"

It was night in the old house.

In the corner was a bit of mist shaped like a decomposed corpse with dripping eye-sockets. De Grandin fired at it, but it did not cease its advance.

They grappled.

(5 column-inches of tussle—Formula B1796341-m)

"Friend Trowbridge," cried the victorious Frenchman, "this is almost uncanny. It is the spirit of a very evil being who lived on

the continent of Shâlmali 900,000 years ago. Not for many years have I seen such a Thing. We must oppose it. But first, let us have some coffee prepared by your so-excellent Nora, after which we will enlist the aid of brave Sergeant Costello."

And so on—ad infinitum . . . ad somnum. However, remember that this has nothing to do with the commercial process of popular-formula manufacture. Flat or not, if this is what the editors believe the herd want, it is obviously the correct thing for quantity production—and all criticism from the standpoint of really interesting and effective narration (according to adult standards) is patently irrelevant and uncalled for. The only thing is that it's a pity to see good story material made ineffective in this way for the readers who would appreciate it most in its proper form. Someone ought to go over the cheap magazines and pick out story-germs which have been ruined by popular treatment; then getting the authors' permission and *actually writing the stories*.

The trouble is that editors have a very myopic vision and absolutely no regard for excellence as such. They note certain preferences on the part of the mob, and proceed to cater to those without even enquiring whether a better grade of writing could be put over without alienating that mob. It is my belief that if they would ascend two or three notches in the scale of excellence, they would lose far fewer of their beloved truck-drivers and elevator boys than the number of literate readers (now totally repelled by the prevailing insufferable crap) they would gain. Thus a less grovelling policy would actually benefit them materially. Actually, cheap readers don't resent a half-literate story nearly as much as literate readers resent a typical formula product. However—this applies only to special groups like weird and scientifiction where no higher-grade magazines exist. Cheap *general* magazines have nothing to gain by improvement, since the literate general reader has magazines of his own, and would not have any occasion to purchase the pulp product.

As to whether the atmosphere of an "action" story could be made less inadequate without great expansion—I think it could, by a suitably trained and gifted craftsman. What is needed so cryingly is *emotional preparation* for the incredible events delineated, and this might conceivably be achieved in brief compass through a very discriminating use of words and rhythms and details in setting the scene and establishing



the relationship of the characters to it. It would not take paragraphs of description to remove the common and *absolutely fatal effect of cheerful casualness in describing tensely tragic or horrible things*. But of course, this kind of brief adequacy could not be achieved in slapdash haste. It would take time and thought and real conscientiousness—a genuine natural zeal for intrinsic quality apart from all other considerations. And all that might be held to form a poor business policy. Moreover—in certain cases greater length might indeed be necessary. One never can tell. Each separate story dictates its own circumstances. It may be added, that *weird* or in general *strange* fiction undoubtedly suffers more than any other kind through devitalisation to the “action” state. This is because the presentation of incredible material depends absolutely on the fancy-cajoling or semi-hypnotising process which nothing but plentiful and convincing atmosphere can set in motion. A *non-strange* “action” story is not nearly such a self-defeating paradox as a story which tries to be strange and “actionated” at the same time.

Yrs. in the Peace of Avichi—  
Abdul Alhazred

G10. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
March 25, 1933.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

All the various envelopes safely arrived, & I wish to thank you especially for that Japanese note—which presented quite the most artistic bit of stationery I have ever seen. My admiration of Japanese art—dating from the days when my infant eyes rested upon various screens, fans, & bits of pottery at the old home—has always been prodigiously keen, & this stationery embodies some of its most attractive characteristics. The combination of utter simplicity, perfect harmony, & civilised repose is quite irresistible—& forms something which could never be duplicated outside Japan. The Japanese carry the spirit of art into the smallest details of life more fully than any other people since the Greeks—and it will be an irreparable loss if their newer generations lose the old spirit in an effort to assimilate western traditions. Hybridism never

pays. Many in Japan realise this, & staunchly oppose Westernisation. Old Nippon is a nation worth watching, because in my opinion it will form the nest of the dominant world civilisations—though not, I hope, till after several more centuries of Anglo-Saxon dominance. One exquisite thing about that stationery is the *wave* motif at the bottom. Nothing has ever captured the inmost spirit of sea-foam as perfectly & vividly as Japanese art.

Thanks, as usual, for the generous array of cuttings. That theory of rock carvings 150,000 years old is certainly fascinating in the extreme—even though it presupposes the evolution of man to have begun at a period somewhat earlier than is normally assumed. If the existing species *Homo sapiens* was already fully evolved 150,000 years ago, then its separation from the general primate stem which later produced such stunted specimens as *Homo neanderthalensis* & the like must have occurred at an incredibly early date—well back in the tertiary period. And the mind reels at the enormous gap of unrecorded history (what cities, arts, books, sciences, inventions, wars, modes of life, historic crises, cataclysms, & what not in those aeons of alternate tropic luxuriance & glaciation?) intervening betwixt the days of these carvings & the prodigiously later day—only 10,000 years ago—when the dawn of agriculture brought the first known stirrings of civilisation in the regions around the Persian Gulf. It is not likely that any continuous civilisation (granting that elder civilisations *did* exist) survived to influence the present chain of civilisations—except perhaps in vague, fragmentary, & largely discredited legends of forgotten elder worlds. Such legends float persistently around India & are taken up by the theosophists, & only the other day my New Orleans friend E. Hoffmann Price (who, by the way, is going to Soviet Russia as a technical expert in April) discovered an intensely picturesque myth-cycle dealing with the earth's early aeons, the lost continents of Kusha (Atlantis) & Shâlmali (Lemuria), & the peopling of the earth from elder planets. There is talk of a secret book in some Eastern shrine, parts of which are older than the earth. All this sounds amusingly like the synthetic mythology I have concocted for my stories, but Price assures me it is actual folklore & promises to send further particulars. All of our group may use this myth-cycle as a background for future stories. As for sunken continents—the one real probability is that a great deal of land once existed in the Pacific which exists no longer (whether a large continuous area or sepa-

rate islands we can't say), & that it supported a much more advanced culture (as witness the Easter Island images & the cyclopean masonry on Ponape & Nan-Matal) than any of the Polynesian groups now possess. My friend Sechrist (the ex-Washingtonian bee expert) lived in Tahiti for years—close to the natives—& studied their folklore in detail. Among their legends is that of "The Wars of Tané", which includes the following:

"... At one time he (Matai, God of Wind & Storm) was so wrathful that a great part of Mother Earth was submerged, & much of the dry land disappeared forever. These are the names of those who submerged so much of the earth: Terrible-Rain, Long-Continued Rain, Fierce-Hailstorm, Mist, Heavy-Dew, & Light-Dew; & these together left projecting only small parts of the earth above the sea."

..... As for the poetry readings—Leonard Bacon was very good. Probably you know of him—for although a thorough & ancestral Rhode Islander, he has a wide reputation as an intelligent satirist. I have always liked his stuff, since to me it seems to have something of the 18th century in it. T. S. Eliot was highly interesting—he read from *The Waste Land* & other poems not very comprehensible to the majority—including myself. ....

Just now I am all tangled up with work—2 revision jobs going at once, & a novel of 80,000 words to revise looming in the offing. I had done 7½ pages of my collaborated story with Price before this avalanche descended, but now heaven knows when I'll be able to get on with the thing. Incidentally—next July the magazine *Weird Tales* will print the first new story of mine (written, however, a year ago) which it has printed in 2 years. I hadn't intended to submit it, but a friend (young A. W. Derleth) to whom I had lent it for copying showed it to the editor, & the latter offered \$140. for it.

.....

Yrs most cordially & sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

611. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
March 25-28-29, 1933.

Dear R E H:—

I digested your extremely interesting letter of the 6th with the usual attention and pleasure, and appreciate the Russell cutting enclosed. ....

..... When people condemn the indiscriminate popular devotion to the sports page and the comfortable seats of the football stadium they are really not so much objecting to the sport itself as to the more solid interests which this rather aimless (and generally inactive) devotion crowds out. The real complaint is against the sterile and trivial mental and emotional life of the average citizen—who is not getting as much out of the experience of being alive as he could if society could find a way to develop his full personality. Today only a minority achieve a full opening-out to the limit of their evolutionary capacity—an undemocratic state of things which many deplore and would like to see replaced by a society in which the majority might reap the fruits of intellectual and aesthetic experience. In such a society the more superficial and primitive things would have their place, but it would not be as grotesquely and disproportionately dominant a place as in a society where the majority remain culturally undeveloped and childish.

... I did not speak of books as mere material objects bought by the pound, but as parts of a collection slowly, carefully, and discriminately made—forming an outgrowth of their possessor's personality and reflecting—through their selection—his character, interests, and degree of taste. Nothing is so intimately a part of a man as his library. Certainly, it would be vain to take pride in a mere showy set of books bought for their fine binding. The pride is in the quality of the choice. But of course, what a library really gives is *satisfaction* rather than mere pride. It contains just what the possessor wants to look at most often, and comes to form his window or gateway to the larger cosmos. One



becomes more attached to books than to anything else except old pictures, old scenes, and certain bits of old furniture. They come to represent what is familiar and beloved, and to symbolise one's whole grasp of experience. Of course, not all the books one may happen to own come within this category. There are borderline books which are only semi-indispensable, and other casual volumes that one both acquires and parts with lightly. But a certain nucleus of one's library takes on the very fondest associations, and forms the very last thing that a really appreciative person would willingly sacrifice.

..... Just *what* is the wild and untrammelled "freedom" that our modern radicals are so vociferously clamouring for? What is it that they *want* to do that they *can't* do? I am curious to know, for they never seem to convey a very clear idea. I don't see many honest and well-disposed people "sitting in dungeons with their legs in iron stocks", nor do I see in the varied and active life of the modern average man anything resembling emasculation or reduction to the guinea-pig or rabbit stage. Just what do our "free souls" *want* to do? Ride bicycles on sidewalks, disregard traffic signals and collide with other people's cars, play the radio at 3 a. m., shoot and carve people for fun, or what? If they despise artists who smudge on canvas and scientists who have a regard for truth, what is it they *don't* despise? Do they esteem running amok with automatic pistols, setting fire to houses at will, pitching tents in the middle of the public streets, or what the hell? I've never seen anybody whom I could imagine as doing any differently from what he actually does do without any interference from anybody—and yet half of our young "intelligentsia" are clamouring for a mystical "freedom" which they imagine exists somewhere in the land of Cockaigne. ....

... I can understand perfectly a person's vaguely romantic feeling of kinship with some colourful barbarous age, and his dreamy, half-serious wish that he might escape from reality into some distant glittering world corresponding to his idyllic conception of that age. With that I could surely have no quarrel—for have I not said that I would like to be a Roman consul of Scipio Aemilianus' time, or a rural squire of the middle 18th century ..... ages which, in all details, I know were not essentially superior to ours? ...

..... Civilisation is a place where human intelligence has tried to minimise the wasteful element of mere blind individual survival-struggle in order to let individuals at least partly attain and enjoy the objects of struggle. Incidentally, though, don't take *New York* as a typical specimen of civilisation. That especial place has moved past the zone of civilisation into that of definite decadence—being rotten, as it were, before it is ripe. One of the great problems of civilisation—still, alas, unsolved—is how to attain a well-rounded maturity without beginning to crumble at the edges. How, in a word, to become fully and permanently adult without incurring senescence. It may be an unsolvable problem. Probably it is. But that does not contradict the fact that a real civilisation, while at its peak, certainly does give mankind a richer life than any other form of social organisation. If you want to name really civilised places of long settlement to contrast with places where unsettledness lingers, choose towns where the polyglot, megalopolitan stage of decadence has not set in. The most thoroughly civilised town I have ever seen is Charleston, S. C. Others are New Orleans, Savannah, Richmond, Philadelphia, New Haven, Hartford, Providence, Worcester, Springfield, Boston, Portland, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto.

... I can see how one-sided my alleged education is. I am abysmally weak in modern languages, and mathematics, and in certain phases of history (such as that of the European Continent in mediaeval and modern times)—while my absence of training in economics and sociology is really a deplorable handicap to me in my efforts to understand the trend of these tense times, when so much of the motivation of nations, as well as their internal problems, depends almost wholly on complex economic consideration. If I seem to some people to *overvalue* learning, it is because I am so damned ignorant myself. We appreciate what we lack ourselves. What has redeemed me from a still worse ignorance is a fairly lively curiosity about things in general; which has led me to read up on various subjects, and to argue at great length with people who know more about things than I do ..... I first attempted stories and verses in 1897—age 7—and kept right along attempting although the results were 100% worthless. About this time I first encountered Poe, and became his eternal disciple. It was in the

spring of 1905 that I first wrote a story worth reading—an effusion called *The Beast in the Cave*, which involved a prodigious amount of study of Kentucky's Mammoth Cave. I still have it, although it isn't up to professional publication grade. The style is heavy and Johnsonese—pure 18th century. In 1908 I decided that fiction was not my forte, and destroyed all but two of my many crude tales. I was then busy writing popular treatises on astronomy and chemistry, which I later destroyed. Around 1910 or 1911 I began to take my versification more seriously than before—a great mistake, since I could never be a first-rate poet. From then onward till 1917 I specialised in verse and general belles-lettres—always with an 18th century bias, and with some ambitions of achieving competence in the critical field. After 1914 I was greatly helped and encouraged by some amateur press associations which I joined—one of which (the only survivor of the two) I still belong to, as attested by the critical brochure I sent you last autumn. . . . I did not resume writing weird tales till 1917, when some of the members of the amateur association saw the two I had saved from the flames and urged me to write more. The results were *The Tomb* and *Dagon*, published later in *W. T.* This resumption was very gradual, though—for in 1918 (an off year in point of health) I wrote only one tale—*Polaris*, which Wright later rejected. In 1919 I received the greatest literary stimulus I had had since discovering Poe—through my discovery of *Dunsany*. Under this new influence I began writing voluminously—though much of the stuff was rotten and unduly imitative of my illustrious model. I heard Dunsany lecture in Boston in October 1919. In 1922 the sudden and radical improvement in my health allowed me to *travel* for the first time. I visited ancient Salem (Arkham) and Marblehead (Kingsport), spent some time in New York, and got as far west as Cleveland. Meanwhile I had been doing a good deal of the revisory work which I still do. In 1923 *W. T.* was founded, and I had my first stories published professionally (except for two serials in a vile rag called *Home Brew*) . . . My literary standards have definitely risen—whether or not my own writing succeeds in keeping up with them. My first fictional period—that of florid, rhetorical stuff—ended about 1927. Then, beginning with *The Colour out of Space*, began my quasi-realistic period. Now I am in a sort of impasse again. I'm dissatisfied with my stuff, but can't agree just what to do about it.

If I ever get time to write any more original tales, I'll probably do quite a bit of diverse experimenting.

As for actual schooldays—I always liked school, although I didn't fit in with the discipline overly well during the fragmentary grammar-school snatches. In high school, however, I never realised there was such a thing as discipline. The teachers—a goodly percentage of them men—took the position that the pupils were near enough to responsible adulthood to be treated as adults, and in return for this compliment the vast majority—including myself—reciprocated by behaving like adults. Naturally we were expected to follow the time-schedule of the school—just as the teachers themselves were obliged to—and it was also naturally expected that we were not to shout and jump about the classrooms like infants or puppies. But we didn't regard this as tyrannical discipline because it was obviously reasonable. What school could be conducted otherwise? I don't recall, at high school, any of the senseless and arbitrary little restrictions which irked me at grammar school—and which seem to have existed in your high school. Nor can I cite any instance of disproportionate severity or arrogant authority-parading in the occasional cases of minor rule-infractions due to exuberance. Not all the teachers, of course, were equally well-liked; but there was nothing in my memory amounting to major friction. I really detested only one teacher—whom I had in algebra, and who found fault with methods of solving problems, even when correct, if the steps did not agree with his own. He *might* have tried to "ride" me (he especially disliked me because my methods were unorthodox) if I had not brought him up short the first time he became really offensive; but as it was, I was able to force a showdown—a blackboard demonstration of the actual correctness (which he wanted to deny by forestalling proof) of my method. After that a policy of dignified peace—though scarcely of cordiality—prevailed betwixt me and the gentleman. In another case I had a tilt with a history teacher, but made a good friend of him. He asked me what the native races of Europe were, and I told him Caucasian and Mongolian. That last didn't suit him, and he began to tell me that *Asia* was the only home of the Mongol. Then I reminded him of the *Lapps*, and of the original stock, at least, of the Finns, Magyars, and Turks. He was doubtful, but slowly began to see the light; and was afterward the most affable of beings. Another near-tilt was in the fall of 1906—



with a fat old lady English teacher. I had handed in a theme entitled "Can the Moon Be Reached By Man"? And something about it (gawd knows what) led her to question its originality. She said it sounded like a magazine article. Well—chance was with me that day, for I had the ammunition to stage a peach of a tableau. Did I deny the magazine-article charge? Not so! Instead, I calmly informed the lady that the theme was indeed a verbatim parallel of an article which had appeared in a rural weekly only a few days before. I felt sure, I said, that no one could possibly object to the parallelism! Indeed, I added—as the good soul's bewilderment became almost apoplectic—I would be glad to show her the printed article in question! Then, reaching in my pocket, I produced a badly printed cutting from a Rhode Island village paper (which would accept almost anything sent to it). Sure enough—here was the selfsame article. And mixed were the emotions of the honest Mrs. Blake when she perused the heading—CAN THE MOON BE REACHED BY MAN? BY H. P. LOVECRAFT. In studies I was not bad—except for mathematics, which repelled and exhausted me. I passed in these subjects—but just about that. Or rather, it was *algebra* which formed the bugbear. Geometry was not so bad. But the whole thing disappointed me bitterly, for I was then intending to pursue *astronomy* as a career, and of course advanced astronomy is simply a mass of mathematics. That was the first major set-back I ever received—the first time I was ever brought up short against a consciousness of my own limitations. It was clear to me that I hadn't brains enough to be an astronomer—and that was a pill I couldn't swallow with equanimity. But it's just as well to have one's ego deflated early. As for other studies—English rather bored me, because it virtually repeated ground over which my home reading had long ago ranged. Latin and Greek were my delight—although I had a long-standing feud with teachers of the former over pronunciation. My grandfather had previously taught me a great deal of Latin, using the traditional English pronunciation taught in his day, but at school I was expected to follow the "Roman method" which attempts to duplicate the actual pronunciation of the Romans. Instead of Caesar (Seezar) I was expected to say "Ky'sar". Cicero became Kikero, Scipio, Skeep'io, and so on. It got on my nerves . . . . fancy pronouncing *juvenes urbium vicinarum* as *yoo'-way-nace oor'-be-oom wee-kee-nab'-room!* Ugh! Well—in this case the school won. I had to modify my method, untraditional as the change seemed to me. At

least, it was a consolation to reflect that this odd way brought me closer to Immortal Rome itself! But the conflict was never quite settled—and even today I waver between methods, with nigh disastrous results. In Greek I had no quarrel—and didn't get beyond the first six books of Xenophon anyhow. Ancient history I ate up avidly; aided by some previous acquaintance with the subject, and by my abiding love of Rome. Botany was a sort of neutral subject with me. German I frankly disliked. Above all else (except perhaps Latin and Ancient History) I revelled in physics and chemistry—subjects I was also studying at home. I had a small and pretty well equipped basement laboratory of my own, but the chance to use the great school laboratories was a rare delight. All told, I had a pretty good time at high school, and look back on that period with considerable affection. Alas for the changes of time. Some of the teachers are dead, my physics-chemistry teacher is a lawyer now, and my old principal is in an insane asylum (the one where my young friend Brobst is now a nurse). Eheu fugaces! Well—I live only two squares from old Hope St. High School now, and the building looks pretty much the same. The papers call it an "antiquated fire-trap" these days—though I saw it built in 1897, long before I ever attended it. There's a symbol of senility—the decadence of buildings which one saw rising in one's far-off youth!

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
H P L

612. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

March 30, 1933

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . As for "wills"—I don't think you need to be worrying about such matters at present. Indeed, your prospective legatees may all be dead while you still flourish! My advice to everybody is to enjoy everything possible oneself, & to leave as little as possible for the enjoyment or performance of others. . . . .

The change from 10 Barnes seems imminent—my aunt & I make many expeditions in quest of possible quarters. So far we are trying to see whether we can't get something cheap without sacrificing a good

neighbourhood. Our hunt has so far been confined to the ancient hill on whose crest I now dwell, & some of the houses investigated have been colonial. One is part of a brick row (late Georgian) that looks exactly like a London street, while another is a yellow cottage with a delightful colonial doorway—slender pillars & fan carving. I have never lived in a colonial house despite my fondness for them. If I could land in one, I would feel at least partly repaid for the upheaval & the loss of familiar walls.

.....  
I remain

Yr most oblig'd obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

613. TO AUGUST DERLETH

All-Fools'  
(April 1, 1933)

Dear A. W.:—

... As for standards—it isn't so much that I deem the masses competent to create or pass upon them in a conscious way, as that I very strongly doubt the competence of the so-called "intellectuals" as well, to perform that function. .... No individual or group, trying to break away from what blind hereditary tradition has bequeathed, ever achieves much real sense of harmony or repose in the new system. There is a feeling of something broken—a lack of harmony with past and background—which promotes a restlessness often expressed in further marks of aimlessness and incongruity. An unconscious aesthetic sense protects against a violation of a certain unity in the historic stream—and this whether or not the old code has any merely rational value. Of course, this disharmony and protest do not occur in cases of gradual modification extending over several generations. In a word—it is a fact that we cannot gain any *really satisfying* illusion of values and ends in life except through the engulfing effect of encountering this same illusion throughout the pages of ancestral history. When that illusion breaks, all illusions break—and a long reign of unstable equilibrium is ahead. Nor is it possible for one self-defined class to secede and pretend to establish new illusions of its own. Ties with the parent body are too

well remembered. I don't think existing evidence sustains your theory that any group of "intellectuals" has evolved a single definite code. There are groups and groups and groups within groups, and codes and codes, and fractions of codes. Drink, drugs, perversion, disintegration ... madness, suicide, the emptiness of futility ... some get by, some do not ... But it is all very natural, and life goes on.

Yr. obt. Servt.—HP

614. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

April 6, 1933

Dear Malik:—

Ecce! At last! Gawd, what a job! I suppose you'll be disappointed, but this is really the best I can do. Of course, this is only a first draught in the largest sense. If I've raised hell with your idea, just slash and alter it to fit, and let me use the result. Or send it to Klarkash-Ton and make a triangular affair of it. Anyhow, I done me dooty!

Although I never feel bound to follow my own first ideas, I have actually done just about what I said I thought needed doing last September. First, the facts, character of Carter, and general tone had to be reconciled with *The Silver Key*. Re-read the latter (which I re-enclose) and see why certain changes had to be made. Second, the supernatural or scientific machinery had to be straightened out in order to explain the marvellous Ancient Ones, etc. These things can't exist materially in the Massachusetts hills. My idea is to have the First Gate (accessible with Silver Key alone) open on an extension of the *earth only* in all dimensions, while the Ultimate Gate (accessible only through the Ancient Ones plus the Silver Key) brings one to a sort of space-focus where *everything in infinity* converges to oneness. This may not mean anything, seriously and mathematically considered, but it ought to pass muster in weird fiction. Anyway, it's the only reasonable means of getting around the problem inherent in the story as first sketched. This illustrates my belief that collaboration is *exactly twice as hard as original writing*. Creation is easy. It accomplishes itself. But to make all your events square with a previously existing plot—that is what I call *work*!

Point three concerns the problem of getting rid of the *schoolroom*



effect inherent in the detailed development of the conic section theory of the cosmos. Clearly, a short story cannot devote practically a quarter of its length to academic dialectics—and this sort of thing ruins the fantastic atmosphere anyway. My solution—aside from expanding the whole tale so that this phase will occupy a smaller place (it really *can't* be a major climax . . . it simply isn't of the stuff of fictional climaxes)—is to *condense and de-technicalise* the geometrical part, yet with as little sacrifice of essential content as possible. I leave it to you how well or how badly I've done it. If I've violated any important laws of mathematics, I'll leave it to you to set things right. But actually, I don't think the mathematical side is of paramount importance—since it involves paradox anyway. For example—the idea of the members of a family line being all facets of the same ultimate entity is a bit tenuous when one considers the facts of descent. Suppose a cousin and I have a grandfather in common. Of whom—the cousin or myself or both—is that grandfather another facet? Is the cousin another facet of myself? Remotely, almost all the members of a race have some unknown ancestor in common. Is, then, a whole race—or perhaps all mankind—a multi-variated projection of a single archetype? In the story I have merely dodged this issue—but I bring it up to shew that we cannot really expect 100% plausibility or serious science in this kind of phantasy. In my original *S. K.* I didn't bother about science at all—it was simply a study in mood. But do what you like about this phase.

The fourth point concerns the ending. I cannot get away from the idea of a certain anticlimax in having a mere *limited and terrestrial* mutation come out of this *prodigiously cosmic* story. Decidedly, Carter's journey ought to be somewhere *inconceivably remote* in time and space. Also—since he is sent on it by an omnipotent BEING, there ought to be no plan (as the parchment-forgetting would imply) in the transmission. Let the loss of the parchment cover something else—preferably conditions of return. I have tried to solve this detail with care. Incidentally—your original climax about an incomplete time-transition would be excellent to use in another story with suitable preparatory framework.

Point five, as brought up last September, concerns *story value*. Clearly, the *fictionally big moment* of the tale is the *revelation in the room at New Orleans*, yet this is not sufficiently prepared for. Not enough is made of the setting, and the revelation is not, as it dramatically ought to

be, the flowering of a gradual and well-proportioned growth. There ought to be a sort of anchoring of the reader's mind and interest in the New Orleans room, so that the climax—when it comes—will *mean more*. It can mean more only if the scene and characters are vivid in the mind of the reader. Accordingly I have laid the New Orleans foundation with much care, and have tried not to let the long Randolph Carter narrative wholly run away with it. I have let the bizarre room and its increasing tension be mentioned from time to time, and have thrown out threads (like the cosmic, coffin-shaped clock from Shamballah) which later figure in the climax. Then I have provided for a definite *scene* with climax-building events immediately preceding the final crash, so that the latter will appear to be the logical outcome of the whole tale, and a constituent part of an homogeneous fabric. Formerly, this crash had a suspicion of the extraneous in it, because it did not contribute to what was originally the major effect. The original story was primarily a tale of cosmic space. The collaboration is primarily a tale of a strange happening in New Orleans. Also contributing toward the climax is a heightened account of the Carter adventures just preceding the return to earth, and on earth up to the time of the estate conference itself. Furthermore—I have thought it advantageous to strengthen the climax itself by adding incidents, bringing in the actual Silver Key, and changing the atmosphere of whimsicality to one of horror.

Now as for the style. *The Silver Key* was a symbolic, dreamy, quasi-poetic study of a mood representing the final phase of my Dunsany-influenced period. It was not only non-intellectual but *anti-intellectual*, hence stood poles away from your dominantly intellectual cosmic study. How can the two be reconciled? Only compromise can turn the trick. It would be impossible to embody your subject-matter in a tale with the exact mood and style of *The Silver Key*, hence I did not try to imitate that. I say "imitate" because I myself have grown away from that light, half-playful Dunsany style in the years since '26. I could not write the *S. K.* today. But on the other hand, the style required moving *toward* the *S. K.* tone in order to avoid a rupture of homogeneity. The romantic-adventure atmosphere, and the touches of pure didactic atmosphere, had to be supplanted by an atmosphere of vague soberness and directness; with a basically rhythmical prose as devoid as possible of stock romantic and scientific language, and with the tension of a dream hovering over everything. This, however, allowed the retention of many

long passages in virtually your own language—for all of your flights of cosmic fancy were really superb. As a definite example of what I think the necessary *blurring of sharp outlines*, compare the two versions of the scene with the Ancient Ones on their pedestals.

Regarding length—the scope of the theme demanded what amounts to quasi-novelle form. As I said, the whole thing had to be expanded so that the schoolroom part might shrink to more modest proportions. The keynote must—so far as the Carter story is concerned—be one of breathless plunging from gulf to gulf—adventure and emotional turmoil—rather than one of static ideas. I have tried to let the moods of the cosmic plunging develop adequately, and to avoid the hurried, after-thought-like suggestion of extraneousness in the original Alamut episode. If shortening is necessary, I'd suggest that it be applied to the more abstract in-the-gulf parts. The thing *could* be shortened. In case of a radical shortening you could omit the Ancient Ones, and let Carter come directly to grips with the lost identity sensation and with IT. Only one gate is really necessary. In preparing the opening, I have tried to make it acceptable to those who remember the *S. K.*, and yet to let the tale be complete for those who have not seen or don't recall its predecessor.

Well—here it is, and do as you like with it. I fear it is not much of a commercial proposition—and you can let it be dormant, without bothering to continue revision or to type it, if you choose. I hope I haven't let you down too badly. As I warned you, I'm a rotten hand at collaboration—but at least I've done my poor best. It occurs to me that this sequel leaves room for at least one more sequel . . . though Heaven forbid the dragging of poor Carter through a Tarzan-like series of forced adventures! I shall, of course, be intensely interested in what you do with the ms., and if I can give more help, pray let me know.

Yr. obt. Servt.—

Abdul Alhazred

615. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Beyond the Inner Gate—  
Hour when the Ancient Ones  
sway on their pillars  
April 8, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Well—I've finished *Through the Gates of the Silver Key*. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young! What a job! I hope Price won't be offended at my writing a virtually new story. I left a lot of his mathematical concepts in, and hope I didn't raise hell with them. I fear the thing will disappoint you, for I'm absolutely no good at collaboration. Price's clear-cut, dominantly *intellectual* mind is so unlike my own dreamy hat-rack that coalescence is really impossible. All I could do was to ride in and hog the whole works. I doubt if the thing will sell. It comes to 34 pages of my script, which means that this version is exactly of the length of the *Witch House*. Carter (at Price's suggestion) manages to reach the centre of absolute space, and from there gets sent to a former life 550 years ago—although a bit of forgetfulness causes this earlier personality to appear *on the earth today*—eventually wandering into the meeting at which his estate is being settled. I have pepped this up by having him sent to the transgalactic planet Yaddith *incalculable aeons ago*. He can return to the *aeon* of the modern earth through the Silver Key, but his oversight prevents his recovering his earthly Carter body—and *his Yaddith body is that of an utterly alien clawed, snouted thing*. Once on earth, however, he can find a spell to regain his human form. He constructs a disguise and mask to enable him to live on earth till he can regain his body. Getting back to earth, and just before recovering his human form, he learns of the estate meeting and hastens in his disguise to save his property. He pretends to be an East Indian friend of his missing self, and tells his story in the third person. His cousin—an heir—calls him a charlatan and detects that his apparent face is only a mask. Tearing off the mask (at a time when no one else is facing Carter), the cousin sees *what lies beneath* and drops dead of fright. Before the others in the room can



see what the dead man saw, Carter vanishes mysteriously in a manner previously provided for. I've put a lot of care into the thing, and tried to develop the terror of cosmic space in an atmospherically effective fashion. Hope Price will like it and that he won't change it too badly. I told him to send it to you—making a triangular collaboration—if he feels dissatisfied yet does not wish to tinker any more himself.

Yrs. for the Chant of the Plane-Tilting—  
E'ch-Pi-El

616. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

The Last Days of 10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
April 23, 1933.

Dear Bernardus:—

..... I thought you'd enjoy Two-Gun's riproaring! As a matter of fact, I didn't disparage his physical interests, but merely pointed out that they do not represent as important and highly evolved a part of him as the imagination which can produce things like *Worms of the Earth* and the myriad rhapsodies on old southwestern days which fill his letters. He is undoubtedly of Herculean strength—his self-disparagements being the products of an exaggerated modesty, or of a wish to represent the physical standards of Texas as altogether superhuman. The quotation from Canevin was indeed vastly interesting. Of course, H. S. had no such strength during the latter days when we knew him, for his illness had sapped the greater part of his vitality; but in his prime he must have been an absolute marvel. And yet he bore his loss of strength with unbroken cheerfulness. In answering Two-Gun I pointed this out, and suggested that Canevin would not have been so cheerful if the decline had been in his creative ability or imagination. After all, Canevin had a sound sense of *relative* values. He prized the physical, yet knew that it was secondary to the mental—something which (except in certain types bound to manual industry) could be spared if necessary. However—that wasn't my main controversy with Sagebrush Bob. The big issue was civilisation versus barbarism. I claim the barbarian of superior race represents a regrettable *waste of biological capacity*; since his energies are chained to a mere struggle for physical

survival, while his intellect and imagination are restricted to a very narrow range of functioning which leaves their richest and most pleasurable potentialities absolutely undeveloped. I fully concede the existence of many admirable qualities in barbarian life, as well as the fact that civilisation brings certain inevitable losses to offset the gains; but must insist that on the whole the boons of civilisation add up to a vastly greater total than do the boons of barbarism. No system of life can be said to be normal or desirable if it leaves unused and undeveloped the very highest qualities which aeon-long evolution has brought to a species. With all the ills of civilisation, it certainly represents a more effective and rewarding way of life for the Aryan race than does a career of ignorant wandering, plundering, fighting, and butchering. In the later 18th century, of course, there was an extensive school of romantic dreamers who idealised the "noble savage" and affected to decry the artificialities of settled life—people like Rousseau, Lord Monboddo, Chateaubriand, etc.—but it is easy to see the ill-formed and unscientific basis of their position. It almost puzzles me that Two-Gun is able to maintain seriously the position he claims to maintain—yet I suppose the west Texas environment counts for much. With his intense rooting in his native soil, he feels himself called upon to idealise all those tendencies in which the southwest differs from the rest of European civilisation. I never realised, until my correspondence with Longhorn just how much of the primitive and sanguinary still lingers in Texan life and psychology. It was my idea that all that stuff vanished in the 1890's, and that the "Wild West" of today was a mere convention of cheap fictioneers. Now I see my mistake—a mistake which I think the average Easterner shares. Evidently in Texas mothers send their precious 3-year-olds to kindergarten with six-shooters on their hips, and with instructions to plug the teacher quickly if he draws a gun first! .....

..... Of course, *all* jury trials are tragic jokes—for no chance bunch of untrained laymen is *ever* able to pass competently and unprejudicedly on highly controversial issues involving complex evidence. .... About the custom of duelling—I am strongly inclined to question the complete wisdom of its total abolition. Most certainly the duels over trivial matters which abounded in past times—especially in New Orleans—represented a barbaric waste of life; and yet there are grave affronts and injuries in life which can hardly be tastefully and honourably met except by sanguinary expiation. If there be no legiti-

mate outlet, these matters will rankle and fester destructively—creating a very bad psychological state, and often giving rise to actual murders, or to other savage revenges of a calculated, scheming sort. Certainly, if any man of responsible standing attacked my honour as a gentleman—or visited any grave wrong on a sister, wife, or daughter of mine—I would not feel rightly adjusted to the world till I had either killed him or caused him to grovel in some especially ignominious way; in short, till I had publicly registered my superiority to the affront in some aesthetically adequate and socially recognised manner. Having no fondness for murder, I would feel greatly at a loss if no open and honourable mode of redress lay open to me. The serious duel over some really adequate issue is not in any way to be compared with the callous and irresponsible slashings of mobs and barbarians. It is a responsibly organised, clear-cut thing which visits no violence except on those who have consciously undertaken the risk. Of course, there are barbaric duels with unsuitable weapons—sabres, shotguns, bowie-knives, etc.—but one does not need to condone these. The weapons of gentlemen—rapiers, or pistols of decent calibre—are not such as to cause the messy body-outraging deaths in which barbarians and callous folk in general seem to revel. However—I dare say it will take more than my opinion to reestablish the custom. The last known duel in Rhode Island (fought by two New Yorkers) occurred in 1835. In 1838 the state legislature forbade duelling, and there is no record of an encounter subsequent to that date. The only duel I know of in my own family was fought by my great-grandfather William Allgood (a native of Northumberland, England) in 1829, in the country near Rochester, N. Y., over animosities bequeathed by the War of 1812. Slight bullet-wounds to both participants formed the only results. . . . .

With regards and blessings—  
Grandpa

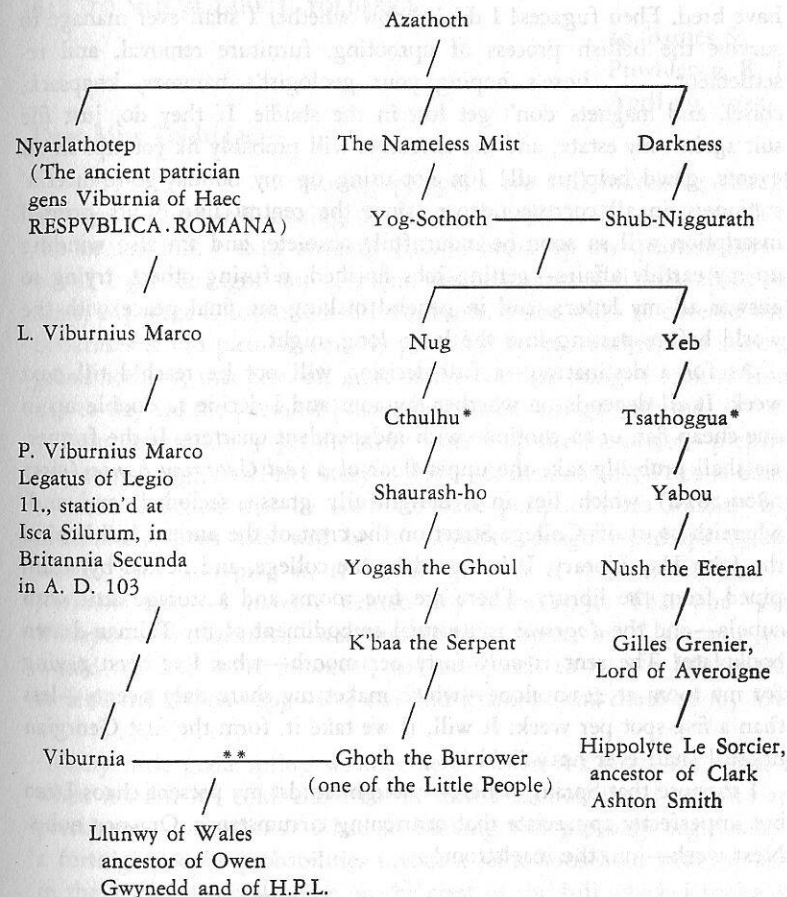
617. TO JAMES F. MORTON

April 27th, 1933

Canlent Crown of Coelestial Creation:—

Hail, Offspring of Jove! I grovel, with a mortal's humility, before thy thunder-guarded throne! Who am I to dispute supremacy with the seed

of antique Ocean, of Ida's (not Haughton!) cloud-piercing crest, of Venus Victrix, and of Pious Æneas? Alas—I have only daemons behind me—my heritage from the Black Crawling Chaos being as follows:



\* First of their respective lines to inhabit this planet.

\*\* This union was an hellish and nameless tragedy.

....  
As for me—I stand poised on the brink of Chaos and Ultimate Horror. When you visit these Plantations in the summer you will not



cross the familiar threshold of #10, for Grandpa will not be there. Poverty takes its toll; and as I think I mention'd once before, I shall shortly have to light out for cheaper quarters despite the strong attachment to #10 which seven years of peaceful and congenial residence have bred. Eheu fugaces! I don't know whether I shall ever manage to survive the hellish process of uprooting, furniture removal, and re-settlement . . . . here's hoping your geologist's hammer, knapsack, chisel, and magnets don't get lost in the shuffle. If they do, just file suit against my estate, and the executors will probably fix you up. In all events, gawd help us all! I'm not using up my Sunday-go-to-meetin' stationery in all correspondence, since the central line of its printed inscription will so soon be mournfully obsolete; and am also winding up my earthly affairs—getting jobs finished, refusing others, trying to answer all my letters, and in general making my final peace with the world before passing into the long, long, night.

As for a destination—a full decision will not be reach'd till next week. It all depends on whether my aunt and I decide to double up in one cheap flat, or to continue with independent quarters. If the former, we shall probably take the upper floor of a *real Georgian house* (circa 1800-1810) which lies in a delightfully grassy, secluded, and and-whereish court off College Street on the crest of the antient hill behind the John Hay Library. It is owned by the college, and heated by steam piped from the library. There are five rooms and a storage attic with cupola—and the *doorway* is a virtual embodiment of my Talman-drawn bookplate! The rent is only forty per month—what I've been paying for my room at #10 alone—which makes my share only twenty—less than a five-spot per week. It will, if we take it, form the first Georgian house I shall ever have liv'd in. . . . .

I suppose that Spring is here—though amidst my present chaos I can but imperfectly appreciate that heartening circumstance. Ora pro nobis. Next week—into the maelstrom!

Thine—

Father Theobaldus

618. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
April 29, 1933

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . Moving prospects are still indecisive, though my aunt & I are still looking. So far we are still limiting our search to the ancient hill. I shall certainly hate to break up my quarters here—but if I get the right sort of room, the new place will look about the same. My place is so stuffed with furniture, & the walls so covered with bookcases & old pictures (mostly paintings by my mother, late aunt, & grandmother), that after all most of the familiar things I look at from day to day are the personal possessions which will go with me. . . . .

I am now trying to get my work wound up for the nonce—preparatory to moving. The Price story is done—& incidentally, Price is doing so well at fiction that he seems to have postponed his Russian trip indefinitely. This tale will be of novelette length—perhaps 13,000 words. Price is typing it, & I shall go over it once more. As to a *Vermont* story—I haven't written any since 1930. That one—*The Whisperer in Darkness*—was published in 1931, but I am sure you would not like it. If, however, you ever wish to read it I'll be glad to lend the carbon copy—if I can find it amidst the chaos of my files. . . . .

Very little good spring weather here—when it's warm it's rainy, & when it's fair it's cold. But I am in such a turmoil that I couldn't appreciate good weather if I had it. Moving will probably begin within a fortnight, & the probabilities favour a joint household with my aunt in the yellow colonial house on the crest of the hill which I spoke of. We shall decide as soon as we can see the interior—the present tenants do not vacate till May 1. This will be only \$40 a month with heat, & has 5 rooms. Another possibility—in case I don't combine with my aunt—is a small \$5 a week apartment down the hill in Benefit St.—

in the old Seagrave mansion where the noted astronomer F. E. Seagrave dwelt & had his private observatory until 1914. ....

With all good wishes—

Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

619. TO JAMES F. MORTON

New Address, effective on and after May 15:  
66 College Street  
Providence, Rhode-Island  
Cold grey dawn of May 14, 1933

Orthochronous Offspring of Olympian Omnipotence:—

This historick epistle, the last to be writ by me from the time-hallow'd shades of 10 Barnes to any living soul, is to notify you of the new destination which you must seek this summer if you would commune with your hammer, knapsack, magnets, and chisel. Alas for terrestrial mutations! I hate to leave the old spot, and have dismantled as little as possible in view of the advent of the moving man—a stalwart buck nigger with a horse-drawn team—tomorrow. However, there are compensations. You will recall from my preceding bulletin that the choice lay betwixt a joint establishment with my aunt in a *real Georgian house* in a delightful and-where on College Hill, and an apartment for myself alone in the old Seagrave Mansion in Benefit Street. Well—the former won. The house was vacant for inspection May 1st, and it didn't take us three minutes to decide. Boy, what a place! God Save the King! At last—at last—after forty-odd years of wistful worship and avid admiration—Grandpa Theobald will live in a REAL COLONIAL HOUSE. Praise George from whom all blessings flow!!

The new Villa Theobalda—yellow and wooden—is situate on the crest of the antient hill in a quaint grassy court just off College Street—behind and next to the marble John Hay Library of Brown University, about half a mile south of here. It is near the top of the same hill (and on the same side) half-way up which my aunt boarded in 1927 at the Handicraft Club in the old Truman Beckwith house. You doubtless recall that brick edifice and its old-fashion'd terraced garden. It is just possible that I have pointed out the future Domus Theobaldianus to

you at one time or another, since one of my aunt's best friends dwells in the lower half. (An antient spinster—a German teacher at the Classical High School,—who was pro-German during the late war, and who tho' the daughter of a Baptist divine hath in latter years been converted to the Popish Church!) My aunt has always had an eye half open for the upper flat whenever it might be vacant. The fine colonial doorway is like my Talman-drawn bookplate come to life, tho' of a slightly later period (circa 1800), with side lights and fan carving instead of a fan-light. Most unfortunately, a Victorian *door* has been inserted—but one can't expect everything. In the rear is a picturesque, village-like, and-whereish garden at a higher level than the front of the house. The upper flat we have taken contains five rooms besides bath and kitchenette nook on the main (second) floor, plus two attick storerooms—one of which is so attractive that I wish I could have it for an extra den! My quarters—a large study and a small bedroom—are on the south side, with my working table under a west window affording a splendid view of some of the lower town's outspread roofs and of the mystical sunsets that flame behind them. The interior is as fascinating as the exterior—with colonial fireplaces, mantels, and chimney cupboards, curving Georgian staircase, wide floor-boards, old-fashion'd latches, small-paned windows, six-panel doors, rear wing with floor at a different level (three steps down), quaint attick stairs, etc.—just like the various old houses open as museums. After admiring such all my life, I find something magical and dreamlike in the notion of *actually living in one* for the first time. To compensate for the built-in alcove shelves at #10, I have purchased three cheap bookcases and a cabinet to file papers in. All this doesn't sound much like an *economy* measure, and yet it is just that. The whole thing—for our two households—costs only what I've been paying for one room and alcove alone at #10. Steam heat and hot water are piped from the adjacent college library—the house being owned by the University.

But gawd, what a job moving will be! I've taken over some of the more fragile bric-a-brac, and have tied my loose papers and magazines into bales for the mover. The real hell will be at the new house, arranging things and re-sorting about 2000 books. May Cthulhu have mercy on me! My aunt isn't going to move in till after I am reasonably settled—if I survive the transitional ordeal.

E. Hoffmann Price is quitting New Orleans and will tarry in the pest



zone for a while. I'm advising him to look up the good old gang, and have given him your address together with Talman's, Sonny's, Samuel's, etc. You'll like him—an alert, voluble chap—highly intelligent, and a West Point graduate. His age is thirty-five.

My *Erich Zann* is just achieving its 5th sale—this time to a cheap British anthology published by Denis Archer.

Well—here's hoping your hammer, magnets, etc. won't get lost! Now to get my Haldeman-Julius booklets tied together to avoid shuffling.

Yrs. from the brink of the Abyss—  
Theobaldus

620. TO AUGUST DERLETH

66 College St.  
Providence, R. I.  
(n.d. mid-May 1933)

Dear A. W.:—

Well—Grandpa is gradually settling down at the new address, though the monstrous task of arranging the books yet looms ahead. Sunday night I completely dismantled my quarters at #10, and brought over all my desk paraphernalia in baskets. Monday the moving men were busy all day, and that night I arranged my transported desk and slept in the new place. Tuesday the movers were on the job again, and after they left I spent nearly every moment till Wednesday's gray dawn in getting my two rooms—study and bedroom—arranged . . . placing furniture, hanging pictures, laying rugs, &c. At odd moments I did enough to the kitchen and dining room to make the preparation of occasional meals possible. Then came the disposal of filed papers, magazines, and other odds and ends—finding corners to fit them. This was a hell of a job even with ample cupboards and my new cabinet, but it is about done now. Yet the *worst* still looms ahead—for on the floor of what will be my aunt's living-room lie the bulk of my books in hopeless disarray! I have until the end of the month—over a week—to get them out of the way, but then the room which they occupy will have to be clear. All this work is the damn dirtiest process this side of hades—right now my shirt would make a good pirate flag if enough of the original white were left to form a skull and crossbones! But the fascination of this

ancient house is, after all, adequate compensation. What a place! Everything in sight is quaintly redolent of my favourite 18th century—woodwork, small-paned windows, and all that. Having two rooms all my own, and a kitchen, dining room, and attic to overflow into I do not need to crowd my possessions as I did at #10—hence my quarters are much more attractive than at any time since 1924. With a Georgian interior to live up to, I am exercising a certain amount of classic restraint in displaying bric-a-brac, pictures, and curios (I've always had a sort of museum complex)—and am ruthlessly banishing a vast amount of material to the attic. The latter is already taking on the aspect of the traditional New England garret, with the heterogeneous accumulations of generations!

—Turning now to look around the room, I can honestly say that I'm damn satisfied. While only three of my pieces of furniture are really 18th century, there's a goodly amount of *early 19th century* material to harmonise in all essentials with the room. Moreover—even the later items are remarkably free from Victorian extravagance; my grandparents having eschewed the worst vagaries of the age when renewing their furniture in the 1870's. And of course, in all the successive reductions after the breaking-up of the old home, I have invariably chosen the *least typically Victorian* things to save. As a result of all this, the present room certainly holds a strong amount of the atmosphere of 1795 or 1800. Only 9 feet high, with white Adam-period woodwork and mantel, appropriate paper, and no violent clashes in decoration, it certainly has a Georgian grace possessed by no other place I have ever inhabited. The keynote and high spot is the colonial fireplace and mantel—the latter adorned with real 18th century candlesticks, a pendulum clock at least a century old, and some old family vases. Above it will hang a marine view—although I am having the ornate Victorian frame removed, and substituting a plain Georgian frame. On the wall beside my desk is a picture (copied in crayon by my mother from a much older painting now in the possession of cousins) of one of the homesteads occupied by my forbears at the time when this house was built. I have had it all my life—but this is the first time it has ever hung in an edifice nearly as old as that which it depicts. (That house is still standing in Foster, R. I., and its interior is much like the interior of this one.) All told, I'm so fascinated with this place that I haven't yet felt acutely homesick for #10. One thing preventing homesickness is the fact that familiar

objects cover so large a part of the encircling walls. After all, the most salient landmarks of home are those which one can carry with one. The views from the various small-paned windows are almost dreamlike—for as I have said, the house is in a semi-rustic court at the top of the great hill with a garden in the rear and on the west side. The window above my desk commands the mystical sunset. From my south bedroom I can look along the court to the ancient houses and trees of College St., and glimpse the splendid old Unitarian steeple (1816) in the background. Eastward—from the bathroom and kitchen windows, and from the east window of my aunt's bedroom—one can see the green front campus and ancient halls of Brown University. Almost all the windows command a view of some sort of green boughs, Georgian belfries, and bits of distant landscape.

The more I study this house, the more I come to believe that the two-story rear is not a *later* addition, but part of a *still older* house which was replaced by the existing 1800 edifice. All the architectural features bespeak greater age. The corner posts of the rooms are exposed, the window sashes have 12 instead of 6 panes, and the windows have inside shutters—all features peculiar to this part of the house. The posts and sashes certainly indicate a period anterior to 1750. Also—the chimneys and mantels in that wing are distinctly archaic. I rather envy my aunt her quaint bedroom in that section. The wing is three steps lower than the main bulk of the house. Oh, well—the 1800 part is good enough for me. The attic is fascinating—I'll have to take a picture of the old-fashioned staircase. The colonial front doorway is a fine specimen—like my bookplate, except that it is of the 1800 instead of the 1750 period. With about an hundred pictures of such doorways in my collection, it certainly gives me a kick to be actually living behind one! Pardon my boring you with all this description—but you can imagine what it means for a life-long antiquarian to be moving into such a house for the first time. William the Conqueror thought he made quite a move in 1066—but that had nothing on my 10—66 move! And the ironic, paradoxical part is that the move is in the interest of *economy*. It is merely *chance* that made this utterly ideal colonial house the cheapest practicable haven for my aunt and myself.

An interesting sidelight reveals the fact that, although 7 years older, I am no weaker now than in 1926. In '24, '25, and '26 I had occasion to hang a certain large painting in a heavy gilt frame, and found that

the task of lifting it taxed my strength to its *absolute limit*. One feather's weight more and I couldn't possibly have managed it. Indeed, I almost collapsed under it in 1925. Well—I never thought I could manage it now—with my added years of senescence—but I gave it a try for good luck. And strange to say, I *could* just swing it—exactly as in '24-25-26. ....

Yr. obt. Grandsire,  
HP

621. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
May 29, 1933.

Dear Jehvish-Ëi:—

..... Don't worry about your literary quiescence—everyone works by fits & starts except human dynamos like Derleth & Price. And don't worry about slow progress, either. It isn't always the quick developer who is the best writer in the end. Incubation periods vary widely. I never even thought of sending any story for professional acceptance till I was 33. As for your alleged lack of experience in life—I don't think that need bother you. There are plenty of subjects to choose from outside the specific local areas you haven't sampled . . . . indeed, I think the greater part of literature deals with things other than corpses, morgues, hospitals, gaols, asylums, prize fights, ball games, brothels, riots, horse-races, & speakeasies. By the way—of these listed items many (i.e., morgue, gaol, prize fight, ball game, brothel, riot, horse-race) are as unknown to me—at 42—as to you. I have, moreover, seen only one corpse (an accident victim) except at peaceful funerals, & have visited a speakeasy (as a non-imbibing spectator) only once—with George Kirk & some others in 1926. My only exploration of a madhouse was last year, when my friend Brobst (a nurse in one) took me over an ideal institution of its kind. I was never in a hospital till 1924—but in that year & in 1929 I had occasion to call on patients in typical institutions of the sort. I have several times been in a police station—usually to inquire about stolen property, & once to see the Chief of Police about the banning of a client's magazine from the stands



—but never in the part devoted to cells. But I hardly let my worldly inexperience prey on my nerves. True, I wouldn't try to write a realistic novel about the underworld—but then, there are lots of things to write about besides the underworld. Moreover—when some familiar phase of life crops up as a necessary *incidental* in a tale, it is often possible to treat it adequately from reliable second-hand information. Thus if I wanted realistic war colouring I'd ask Price or some other veteran for the dope. For prize fight stuff I'd apply to Bob Howard. For police dope, Joe Lynch . . . & so on. Of course, it wouldn't do to take a *main theme* at second hand—but then, *nobody ought to choose a main theme from subjects which interest him so little as to preclude his sampling them*. I, for my part, haven't the slightest desire to write about fights or gaols or speakeasies or the like as main themes.

I read *The Cell* with great interest, & believe it has an abundance of points of promise. The chief flaw seems to be a touch of sentimentality—& a certain unreality in treating of the Valdés family. While pride often goes with humble callings in Spain, I doubt if the combination of exclusive old traditions, cobbling, & stevedoring which you depict is a very typical one. Something seems strained—it is not usual for the daughter of a stevedore & granddaughter of a cobbler to receive a sudden appointment as instructor in a far-off American college. Beware of romanticising. Look, too, to linguistic details. Are you aware that the dominant language of Barcelona—& all that part of Spain—is the Catalan dialect & not ordinary Castilian? And how about the name of that brother? In ordinary Spanish, at least, the name corresponding to *Vincent* is spelled *Vicente*—the first *n* being omitted. In writing the oath *caramba* I think you were right the first time—when you had only one *r*. And check up on that Lord's Prayer. What is it? Catalan? You have something like the French *notre* where real Spanish would be *nuestro*. If it's Catalan, I retract all criticism,—for I haven't an idea of what that dialect is like. Another thing to debate is the ending of the story. Some might consider it melodramatic—yet on the other hand many cases of cell-suicide through sensitive pride are actually on record. It might be possible to record this suicide in a way from which all theatricality & sentimentality would be absent—though I couldn't say offhand how it could be done. Indeed, it is by no means obtrusively melodramatic as it is. There is really great stuff in this story—detail, atmosphere, & a realistic sense of futility—& I hope you will not make

the mistake of underestimating it. Don't get discouraged—authorship isn't anything that sprouts overnight! I hope you'll have good luck with your *Fann*. What if it does reach novel length? Some allege that novels have a better chance for placement than novelettes. By the way—any time you want some minute, ruthless criticism from a modern angle, why don't you send specimens to Derleth? If you shewed him *The Tin Roof* & *The Cell* he might have some very useful suggestions to offer—together, of course, with some not so useful.

..... As for the Nazis—of their crudeness there can be no dispute, yet in many ways the impartial analyst cannot help having a certain sympathy for some phases of their position. They are fighting, in their naive & narrow way, a certain widespread & insidious *mood* of recent years which certainly spells potential decadence for the western world—& one can't help respecting that *intention*, however ugly & even dangerous some of their *methods* may appear to be. Hitler is no Mussolini—but I'm damned if the poor chap isn't profoundly sincere & patriotic. It is to his credit rather than otherwise that he doesn't subscribe to the windy flatulence of the idealistic "liberals" whose policies lead only to chaos & collapse. As for his much-advertised & hysterically condemned Jew policy—there is something to be said for one phase of it. Of course it is silly to ban Jewish books, to impose disabilities on Germanically cultured Jews, or to assume that—biologically speaking—a dash of Semitic blood unfits one for Aryan citizenship. That is generally conceded. But after all, there is a very real & very grave problem in the presence of an intellectually powerful minority springing from a profoundly alien & emotionally repulsive culture-stream, defying assimilation as a whole, & using its keen mentality & ruthless enterprise to secure a disproportionate hold on the mental & aesthetic life of a nation. In such a case it is foolish to quibble about "rights" & "principles". The question is whether an enormous Aryan nation, with all the innate feelings & perspectives of Aryan culture, is going to allow its formulated expression (literary models, art, music, &c) to bely & embarrass it by reflecting an altogether different & sometimes hostile set of feelings & perspectives through a gradual & imperceptible Semitic control of all the avenues of utterance. It is needless to point out that a nation's literary & artistic utterance depends very largely on those who control the periodicals, schools, colleges, publishing houses, galleries, theatres, & so forth—this control largely de-

termining what works & types of art shall receive preference in presentation to the public & in treatment by critics, & what attitudes shall receive official recommendation. If such control be gradually seized by a culture-group profoundly foreign to the natural culture-stream of the nation, the result is bound to be tense, awkward, & finally intolerable. In Germany I rather think such a state of things had almost come about. The loudest cultural voices were those of persons whose basic ideals & sense of values were not German. In books, education, drama, art, philosophy, &c., the voice of real Germany was almost drowned out by a voice which pretended to be German but was not. To say that nothing ought to be done about this is rash. If a minority-overridden culture has any vitality at all, it will revolt in the end—& of course crudely at first. In my opinion, all nations ought to take quiet & moderate steps to get such pivotal forces as education, large-scale publishing, legal interpretation, criticism, dramatic management, artistic control, &c. into the hands of those who inherit the respective main-streams of thought & feeling of those nations. Chinamen ought not to let American missionaries dictate & interpret their policies—& by the same token Aryans ought not to leave their guidance & interpretation to persons of an irreconcilable Semitic culture. Of course, this does not mean that the crudities of Hitlerism are to be copied. It is absurd to think that a man of complete Aryan culture ought to be squelched because he has a quarter-share of Semitic blood, or anything like that. But it is not absurd to feel that something ought to be done to keep expression true to the real psychology of the nation involved. We really face the same problem in America—where the city of New York is virtually lost to the national fabric through its tragic & all-pervasive Semitisation. Our literature & drama, selected by Jewish producers & great Jewish publishing houses like Knopf, & feeling the pressure of Jewish finance & mercantile advertising, are daily getting farther & farther from the real feelings of the plain American in New England or Virginia or Kansas; whilst the profound Semitism of New York is affecting the “intellectuals” who flock there & creating a flimsy & synthetic body of culture & ideology radically hostile to the virile American attitude. Some day I hope that a reasonably civilised way of getting America’s voice uppermost again can be devised. Not that I would advocate violence—but certainly, I can’t regard the Nazis with that complete lack of sym-

pathy shewn by those who take popular newspaper sentiment at face value. By the way—it’s hardly accurate to compare the Jewish with the negro problem. The trouble with the Jew is not his blood—which can mix with ours without disastrous results—but his persistent & antagonistic *culture-tradition*. On the other hand, the negro represents a vastly inferior biological variant which must under no circumstances taint our Aryan stock. The absolute colour-line as applied to negroes is both necessary & sensible, whereas a similar deadline against Jews (though attempted by Hitler) is ridiculous.

..... As for the Scottsboro case—it seems to me that the idealists & negrophiles are a little hasty in getting excited about it. Naturally nobody wants to kill the poor niggers unless they were guilty—that is, nobody who needs to be taken into account—but it doesn’t seem to me that their innocence is at all likely. This is no low-grade lynching incident. A very fair court has passed on the case—& if the culprits were mere white bums, who hadn’t happened to excite the sympathy of the radical element, there would be no stir at all about the matter. The fact that the victims were low wenches is wholly immaterial except so far as their credibility is concerned. And so far as their now clashing stories go, it seems to me that their first account is more likely to be true than is the second & changed story of the one whom the radicals of the defence very clearly bought over to their side. However, in view of the lack of testimony corroborating that of the women, it might be just as well not to execute the blacks. I think their conviction ought to be sustained, but that the sentence ought to be commuted to life imprisonment—preferably in some remote prison where mob violence need not be feared. Then if any new evidence comes up in their favour, it will not be too late to rectify any mistake which may have been made. ....

Unless you possess a superhuman fund of analytical acumen, you won’t make much of *The Waste Land*. It is such a jumble of obscure allusions, subjective impressions, & intentional chaos that only a genius could elucidate it without a key. If it’s hard to get in Pittsburgh, I’ll lend you my old tattered copy of *The Dial* (Nov. 1922) containing it. In those days I kept up with the times more than I do now.

Yes—I finished *The Silver Key* sequel last month, & have persuaded Price to let it be as I wrote it. We haven’t yet submitted it to Wright,



but my hopes of acceptance are not high. I had to postpone the novel-revision job on account of moving—whether I've lost it or not I don't yet know.

As for the voluminous reading programme of you & young Auguste-Guillaume—I was entirely sincere in saying that I envy you. I read altogether too little—being busy with other tasks & easily fatigued. Of course, one does not absorb such immense quantities all through life—but it is well to do it in youth if one can, in order to lay the foundations of a good literary background. I soaked up vast numbers of books in my youth; though they were seldom new ones, & were more often works on science & history than volumes of belles-lettres. I never cared for new books—which in my day, of course, was a very sensible attitude, insomuch as a great part of the current output (especially in America) was completely inane junk. I had a period of brushing up on new material in the early 1920's, & fancy I had better repeat the process soon in order to get an idea of the dominant trend.

That novel about the Florida crackers must be interesting. I saw quite a number of crackers while visiting Whitehead in 1931, but had no chance to study their vocabulary extensively. Compulsory education seems likely to change the new generation vastly. Among Whitehead's many protégés were two little cracker boys whose parents could not read or write, but who were themselves bright & well-informed, & with hardly any perceptible dialect.

About V. F. Calverton—what I've seen of his hasn't greatly impressed me. Though undeniably scholarly, & effective as a populariser of anthropology, he is a confirmed & hopeless faddist—a long-haired bolshevik so full of erratic social theories that his judgments can scarcely be considered important. I'll endeavour to read his remarks on American literature in due course of time, though I differ basically & diametrically from him in virtually all criteria of values & underlying assumptions. To begin with, I believe it is a childish & absurd fallacy to fancy that American literature & aesthetics either ought to be or conceivably could be other than a normal prolongation of the original English stream, with such local modifications as geography, social conditions, & historic experience may naturally introduce. The whole idea that a section of the Anglo-Saxon world ought to (or could) have a separate, autochthonous culture of its own is sheer flimsy nonsense—the product of a febrile, irresponsible radicalism of thought conjoined to a naive disregard of

actual (as distinguished from theoretical) history. A culture or civilisation is a profound, pervasive thing—producible only through long centuries of continuous & homogeneous life, & having nothing whatever to do with political nationality. We recognise, very properly, only one Greek world & Greek culture—though this world was divided into a great number of absolutely separate & often hostile political states, whose interests & modes of life in many cases differed far more than do the interests & modes of life of the old & of the new English nations. There were local variants, corresponding to local differences in social & political conditions; yet no one was ass enough to fancy that Athens & Pergamus, Syracuse & Tarentum, ought to have separate cultures in the sense that the cultures of Persia & Egypt & Phoenicia & Rome were separate from that of Greece. And even today there are few fools blatant enough to claim that Austria & Germany have different civilisations. If North America has *any civilisation at all*, it is certainly that of the mother land whence came all its institutions, perspectives, language, & determinant pioneering stock. *That culture, & that alone, was carried over bodily by the men who made the wild continent a settled abode for the white race.* For 300 years it has carried on as before, adapting itself to local conditions & crystallising into a definite local variant. It is a natural, organic growth—as profound, ingrained, & inevitable as our typical physiognomies & mental processes. We could not shed it if we wanted to—and no American of sense *would* want to. It is pitiful to see a fad-ridden American try to disavow what is deeply & naturally his, & transparently & unconvincingly pretend to be a synthetic Frenchman or Russian or general conglomerate or god knows what . . . . . theatrically labelling his new character "New American." The new pose is shaky, false, & meaningless because it has no possible foundation. It postulates conditions which are necessarily lacking—a new culture-basis which does not & cannot exist, plus the absence of a real culture-basis which does & must exist, & cannot be argued away. No culture but our own English one extends behind us or behind our native soil—if we want to find another we must go north to French Quebec or south to Spanish Cuba & Mexico.

Altogether too much is made by radical theorists of the foreign immigrant influence. It is true that hordes of persons of non-English heritage have entered the country—but that has nothing to do with the seated culture of the region. These foreigners did not make the nation.

They merely flocked in later to enjoy what others had made. Our own civilisation was irrevocably seated here long before they came, & it would be silly to suppose that we shall allow these crumb-snatchers to disturb the foundations which we laid for our descendants. They can either conform to the native culture which they find, or get the hell out of here. We *made* this nation, & if any of the skulking Jews & Dagoes who crawl after us to eat the fruit we laboriously planted think they can dictate to us, they'll soon learn better by means of a heavy-shod boot applied to their rear ends. Most of them are only the scum & dregs of their own countries, anyhow—the weaklings who couldn't keep on top among their own people. We welcome any biologically & culturally assimilable newcomers *who are willing to abide by our institutions*: but if any crawling peasants & ghetto bastards expect to troop in here & *mould us in their own direction*, we'll shew them in short order where they get off!

It is also a vast mistake to fancy that the original foreign minorities in the colonies—the Dutch of New York, the Germans of Pennsylvania, the Huguenots of various sections, &c.—form a basis for a special non-English culture. The plain fact is that these elements were *not sufficiently numerous to affect the general fabric*. Most of their members were absorbed with absolute completeness into the English mainstream, while the remaining unassimilated nuclei were not large enough to leaven the general culture. The most they did was to engraft a few new words or architectural forms or trivial customs upon the Anglo-Saxon fabric—just as the Indians did. While they gave a few faint touches of unique colour to the surface of the local culture-stream, we cannot justly say that they actually wrenched that stream from its Anglo-Saxon sources. The same is true of those later waves of sturdy pioneer immigration—the Germans & Scandinavians who settled the mid-west with a constructiveness akin to our own—which must be differentiated from the modern locust-pest of Slavs & Semites & Mediterraneans. Solid & admirable as these people were, they could not alter the seated civilisation of the nation; hence came eventually within the Anglo-Saxon cultural radius. As acute a contemporary observer as André Siegfried attests the continued dominance of the native English tradition despite all the influences which seek to vitiate it.

Still less do I see any sense in the claim that the peculiar economic & social conditions of America, all apart from the derivation of the

population, have successfully founded a new “civilisation” distinct from the old. That is a self-evident fallacy, because real civilisations are things of slow, natural growth, which cannot be established offhand, or in the course of a few decades. It may indeed be true that the local conditions in America—the hard scramble for material wealth & power, & the consequent worship of size, speed, & ostentation in place of quality, together with exaltation of crudeness & a contempt for refinement, sensitiveness, & traditional beauty—are *gradually undermining* our civilisation (except in certain spots of perfect preservation) & laying the foundations for a future machine-age variant; but this does not mean either that our culture is yet dead, or that the future culture is yet born. Cultures neither die nor are born in a single day. What is more—the new culture, if it ever does develop, will not in any sense be *ours*. The only one *we* can possess is the old Anglo-Saxon one which our fathers transmitted to us. When the future machine culture finally crystallises, it will be as alien to us—to our innate standards & perspectives & impulses—as the cultures of China, Nineveh, & Easter Island. It will have nothing to do with anything we now inherit or know or feel . . . . . & one may add that it will probably, because of its callously quantitative & utilitarian basis & its cheaply plebeian ideals, be vastly inferior in richness & inspiration to any of the leisurely & highly developed European or Asiatic cultures now dominant. I have some hope that the growth of this usurping rabble-culture may be substantially checked by intelligent effort, & by the sobering influence & possible social-economic consequences of the present depression. Our own culture is still strong in New England & the old tidewater South, & if we fight hard to preserve it we may yet defeat the machines & the mob & the Calvertons.

Meanwhile, of course, part of our upheaved generation is all at sea, & ready to swallow any cultural nostrum. Young pedants who note the moderate & legitimate contributions of foreign artistic streams to our own are ready to announce that we have abandoned our heritage & gone over altogether to one—or several—or all—of these contributing streams. Illiterate coachmen's sons who try to write & are unable to get the feel of a decent English style proceed to limp along in a graceless jargon which their ignorance & egotism proclaim as a “new & superior” & purely American mode of utterance. City-bred clods with too little imagination to appreciate natural beauty devise epics of their native



slums & blatantly repudiate our natural rural heritage. Myopic little Jews, insensitive to the majestic pageantry of history & tradition (for our pageantry is not theirs), repudiate the past & proclaim that the sole logical province of the poet & novelist is the pathology of neuroses & the sewer system of New York City. That is the "new Americanism". The real truth is, of course, that these radical innovators do not represent anything at all—i. e., merely represent *the absence of something*. What they lack is any coördinated background & unified antecedents whatsoever. Having nothing of their own, they try to assemble a hodge-podge of new & suddenly-born culture. Actually, what they achieve is merely an unplaced & unplaceable chaos. If that is new-Americanism, I thank the powers of the cosmos I am a Rhode-Island Englishman of the old tradition! Even if my culture-stream be a thinned & effete one, it is at least *something* as distinguished from *nothing at all*. At least, I have not exchanged my one possible heritage for an expansive confusion which I could never truly possess & which would never be able to express anything worth expressing. In a time of decadence it is often better to stand by the old—which still has possibilities—than to plunge into the hapless welter of unformed barbarism which is the sole available alternative. I had rather be a Symmachus or Boëthius than an Odoacer or Theodoric.

Yr most obt hble Servt  
—Ech-Pi-El

## 622. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

From the 66th Vortex of the  
new Space-Time Abyss—  
Hour of the faint scratching  
May 31, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

By the way—in my new quarters the Nameless Eikon of pre-human horror has a new function to perform. . . . . It is a book-end, situate thus on the top of a broad, glass-doored case in the neighbourhood of an old-fashioned full-mounted terrestrial globe. Slowly, day by day, something sinister appears to be stealing into the books thus

supported. New and horrible meanings begin to creep into the text—between the lines, as it were—and one finds hitherto unperceived implications of hideousness in the headings of chapters and the apparently fortuitous vertical lines formed by the falling of words beneath one another. A very harmless book on astronomy has begun to suggest the most unutterable cosmic horrors, whilst a textbook of botany hints at monstrous fungi and blasphemous thallophytes more loathsome than the Saturnian vegetation of a Klarkash-Tonic drawing! And the text of the book next the Eikon is getting *uneven*. Certain words have commenced to stand out unnaturally from the rest of the text, *and what they convey is not to be repeated, or to be perused without apprehension*.

Thine in the forgotten ritual of Mnar—  
E'ch-Pi-El

## 623. TO AUGUST DERLETH

66 College St.  
Providence, R. I.  
June 5, 1933

Dear A. W.:—

. . . Both of these tales are really splendid studies in eccentric human nature and regional colour. As a whole, they have the aura of genuine vitality about them—all the characters are truly alive and individualised—plus a sense of cosmic continuity and of the larger flow of life which is typically d'Erlettian. Price is right in attributing to such work the quality of memory-stimulation. These recallings of the past come to seem like one's own memories, and the peculiar and distinctive life of the Wisconsin valley emerges as something one almost feels one has known. You are evidently, by natural endowment, the logical laureate of the Sac countryside in general, and of its more secluded, introspective, and psychologically abnormal types in particular. A certain type of humanity—wistful, neurotic, hypersensitive, ineffectual—gains from you a vivid presentation almost without a parallel.

I think you are right in considering the longer tale the more solid, balanced, and powerful of the two. While *Nine Strands* is a tremendously fine individual study, *Place of Hawks* has a scope, variety, setting, and drama which make it the broader and more representative of the

two—and the more effective as fiction. These items, in conjunction with *Five Alone* and *Farway House*, will certainly form a fine collection—a sort of miniature Wisconsin Comédie Humaine. Of the four, I'd say that *Five Alone* and *Place of Hawks* were tied for first place aesthetically, and that *Place of Hawks* leads from the standpoint of technique and intrinsic interest.

... Gradually, I think, others will convince you that the indiscriminate use of coincidences and improbabilities in building up "big scenes" is a dangerously weakening device which mars the naturalness and convincingness of even the finest work. ... Point II concerns the family name *Delano*—and I'll preface it by asking whether you don't think it a bit improbable for anybody—even an extraordinarily reared person—not to know his mother's maiden name (p. 48). About the name—you have *Delano* (Anglicised form of de Laneaux) represented as a typical Creole name, whereas I doubt if it can exist in Louisiana. The family of *Delano* is of Huguenot origin and New England locale—the Anglicisation process being (like the transformation of Appolos Rivoire into Paul Revere) a peculiar result of New England's closely-knit English texture. This process would never have occurred in Louisiana, where French continued as a spoken language till almost the present century and generation. I never heard of a French name Anglicised in Louisiana. On the contrary, non-French names were often *Gallicised* there—as illustrated by the Gallicisation of the early German stock on the Mississippi above New Orleans, where names like *Troxler* became *Trosclair*. If any de Laneaux settled in Louisiana, the chances are that he and his posterity stayed de Laneaux. *Delano* is, as far as I know, purely a New England transformation, and the only known *Delanos* are descendants of New England Huguenot stock. Of course, they have spread—but they wouldn't be likely to be found amidst the Catholic Creoles of Louisiana. Any transformation of the name de Laneaux to *Delano* could be expected only when the English influence was strong. It might have occurred amongst the Huguenots of New Rochelle, N. Y., or amongst those of Charleston. The Charleston Huguenots were about 50-50 in Anglicising their names ... some did and some didn't. Thus we find both *Petigrus* and *Pettigrews* springing from the same *Charleston* family. In New England a slow Anglicisation of French-Canadian names (etymological rather than phonetic—thus *Leblanc* becomes *White*, and *Dubois*, *Wood* or *Forrest*) is still going on. ....

The household at #66 continues to crystallise. Saturday evening my aunt's living-room became settled, and I must confess that my own personal quarters are outdone. She has some old family pieces—really colonial—that I lack, including a slat-back chair of the early 18th century. Her mantel is a triumph—old candlesticks and plates, and an old family painting above it. Other features of the room are some oil paintings my grandfather brought from Europe in 1878, and a life-size bust of Clytië on a pedestal in a plush-hung niche. The atmosphere of my old home is recalled with a strange and poignant magic, since things have come out of long-term storage, while other items long separated are now united after 29 years. Over the staircase we are hanging an immense canvas (*Rocks at Narragansett Pier*) by my late elder aunt (I could curse the damn cosmos that she hasn't survived to see this layout), for which no space has previously been available since the original home disintegration of 1904. It is certainly ironic that the need for *retrenchment* should cause such a paradoxical gesture of *expansion*! Once again a home with the echoes of long-departed days ... and a *Georgian* one at that, which the old home wasn't!

Had my telescope out last night—pretty fair sky—vista here. Mars and Jupiter were so close together that I could get them into the same telescopic field with a 150-diameter eyepiece. ...

Yr. obt. grandsire—  
HP

624. TO ROBERT BLOCH

66 College Street  
June 9, 1933

Dear Bho-Blök:—

Snap of me at your age would be excellent material for the comic papers—and without the aid of any Napoleon's hat or rubber cigar! Incidentally, though, I used to be a great hand at rigging up—having a whole makeup kit of bushy beards, fierce moustaches, slouch hats, daggers, pistols, and other appurtenances of the desperate characters toward which my youthful fancy inclined me. Glad that glasses don't bother you—I used to have to wear them all the time, and they kept my nose and ears in a state of perpetual irritation. Now I wear them only for



steady middle-distance vision—as at the theatre, or at illustrated lectures. . . . Someday, when in a comedy mood, I'll send you a snap or two of Grandpa taken in the 1922-24 period. Can you imagine my trunk hitched to a fat man's face? Incidentally, it was during my fat period that I had my only personal meeting with our friend Moe—what a mental picture he must carry!

.. Yrs. by the Dark Lore & Elder Sign—  
E'ch-Pi-El

625. TO AUGUST DERLETH

June 10, 1933

Dear A. W.:—

.. About de Laneaux-Delano—of course I didn't mean that the family was purely Huguenot, but simply that it was the Huguenot branch whose name became Anglicised in this especial way. Other branches may have settled in Quebec or New Orleans, but in the purely French environment of those places the names would have remained unimpaired—or even if accidentally corrupted would not have followed the laws of English phonetics. . . . The -o termination for -eaux French names was a common modification in the English colonies. One of our Rhode Island pioneers, *Stephen Gano*, was originally *Etienne Ganeaux*. . . .

Yr. obt. Grandsire,  
HP

626. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Prospect Terrace on the Antient Hill—

94° in the shade by official reading . . . . .

feeling great except for a cold wind which  
cuts through the warmth. Hope there won't  
be a thunderstorm.

June 12, 1933

Century-Climbing Caesar of Carlovingian Collidity:—

.....

Well—all the Theobaldi are approximately settled at #66 at last. Gawd, what a joint! Our things fit in unbelievably well, and we're trying to live up to the colonial architecture by soft-pedalling the Victorian bric-a-brac and such. . . . All told, the layout has some surprising atmospheric resemblances to 454 Angell Street despite its predominant Georgianism. The utter charm and fascination of coming *home* through a carved colonial doorway, and sitting beside a white Georgian mantel gazing out through small-paned windows over a sea of ancient roofs and sun-golden foliage, can scarcely be described without recourse to poesy. The place is so much like a museum that I half expect some guard to shew up and boot me out at five o'clock closing time! Rather good, too, to have a regular domestick environment instead of rooming. Your knapsack et al *seem* safe so far, and I shall be looking for you about the time July merges into my native August. I've just bought a camp cot to enable me to save occasional guests the expenses of the Crown or its equivalents. . .

.....

... While of course the demand for more than 0.75 Aryan blood in full citizens is an excessive one except where the diluting blood is biologically inferior—as with Negroes and Australoids—it remains a fact that many modern nations need to take steps to preserve the integrity of their own native cultures against shrewd and pushing alien influences. One must view such problems realistically—without patriotic sentimentality like Hitler's on the one hand, and without idealistic sentimentality on the other hand. Certainly, a dash of alien blood of a

superior race (among which a large section of Jews as well as Mongols must be included) does not harm another superior stock *so long as the culture is unimpaired*. But that's where the rub comes. When the alien element is strong or shrewd enough to menace the purity of the culture amidst which it parasitically lodges, it is time to do something. So far as Jews are concerned, it would't hurt a nation to absorb a few thousand provided they were not a physiognomically aberrant type and provided they left their culture and folkways behind them so that the new generation would hold no memories except of the dominant racial tradition. Palgrave's Golden Treasury is no less golden because the anthropologist's old man was an ex-Cohen. So far, Hitler is wrong. . . . . A man brought up in the real German tradition, with early impressions confirming the virile pagan and Protestant psychology which belongs to the nation and excluding any of the hereditary teachings peculiar to another culture, ought certainly to be a full citizen and potential officeholder even if  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  or fully Jewish in genealogy. *But no man who inherits Jewish feelings and perspectives ought to hold a pivotal post in any Aryan nation*. That's no insult to intellectual Jews—it's simply common-sense. If the Jews had a nation of their own, (as they *would* if they had our guts and self-respect) I'd be the first to insist that it be kept free of Aryan influences. As it is, I honestly regret the Aryan taint (*any* infusion is a "taint" if it's where it *doesn't belong*) in the noble and ancient culture of Japan. Hitler merely applies the wrong test. A real colour-line needs to be drawn only against certain definitely alien physical types—chiefly the biologically underdeveloped black races. Within the truly Caucasian race the test ought to be cultural—depending on each individual's personal history and natural reactions, as determined by proper psychological and other investigations. If any undoubted Caucasian *thinks and feels* like an Aryan, then let him hold office in an Aryan nation. This would not only cut down the unpleasant foreign percentage in power, but would speed up the assimilation of the whole alien element. (Of course, no *new* members of an alien culture ought to be admitted to a nation except in small quantity.) . . . . . Incidentally—all these newspaper discussions of recent months miss the one great point of the age-long and ineradicable Jew-Aryan line of cleavage. It isn't *religion*—all religion is a negligible factor today. It is only slightly *race*—half the Jews in existence are of very superior stock, as their ability to undermine our culture shews; and only a fraction are more

physically repulsive than many races whom we hate less. The real, impassable barrier is *cultural*. Our whole system of values differs *utterly and irreconcilably* from the Jewish system, even though (and this is what obscures the real problem) our absurd pretence at harbouring the silly, alien, decadent Jewish by-product called Christianity makes us pretend to endorse the Hebrew slave-psychology. The Jew is a worshipper of the sort of intellectual-ethical adjustment which his superstitious ancestors interpreted as cosmic "righteousness". His *supreme* test of value is the degree of perfection of this adjustment—to other things he is relatively indifferent. We are Aryan pagans by heritage, and our deep, instinctive code of ultimate values is completely antipodal to the Jew's. Twenty centuries of flabby Christian fakery have not succeeded in changing our real natures one jot. Our code is not that of hair-splitting old slave-women. We are *men*—free men—and *the one sole thing that supremely matters to us is the maintenance of our own unbroken freedom and dominance*. In our hearts—whatever our lips say—our sole definition of a *man* as distinguished from a crawling reptile is a person who possesses a maximum of freedom of action, who lives under the government he *chooses*, and *who unhesitatingly accepts death in preference to servitude*. If a group of us is weak, it fights until it is either free or dead. It is never *broken* or *cowed*. It may die and vanish, but it never lives to be kicked around. What we can't forgive in the Jew is not the tone of his prayers or the size of his nose, but *the fact that he is willing to survive under the conditions he accepts*. Being *weak* may not have been his fault—but it *is* his fault *that he is alive and not free and dominant*. If we were as weak as he, and could not fight our way to self-respect, we would perish utterly—taunting our foes, virile and unbroken, as the last man fell. . . .

Good Jew-Aryan relations can come only after these plain truths are recognised on both sides. In the end, there will have to be a separation of the cultural Jew from the body politic, plus a complete absorption—with abandonment of hereditary traditions—of thousands of other Jews. That will call for concessions on both sides—the Jews will have to realise that they can't drag their folkways into our national patterns, while we will have to abandon the tight race-lines of the Hitlerites. That ought not to be a hardship either way. The Jews are used to subordinate positions, and good governments need impose no hardships on their unassimilable faction. And on the other side—Aryan nations



have taken on varying doses of Semitic blood in the past (Spain has oceans of it; England and America since Cromwell's time have absorbed a trickle) without any unfavourable results whatsoever. Give and take. . . .

. . . .  
 .. Boy! Have I been enjoying the warm spell? Ninety degrees Friday, eighty-six degrees Saturday, eighty-six Sunday, ninety-four degrees today . . . . I'll let the oblique-orb'd empyrean know that Grandpa is having his day! Haven't felt so spry since I was in New Orleans—am taking sizeable walks (average twelve miles) each day that the weather isn't doubtful, exploring a delectable rural region north of Providence which I'd never visited before . . . . Smithfield Road, Douglas Pike, Wenscott Reservoir, etc. . . . west of my favourite Quinsnicket stamping-ground. Swell scenery—winding roads, ancient farmsteads, rocky, rolling-meadows, mystical, shadowy woods, stone walls, blue lakelets, and splendid prospects whose twilight allurements suggests unrevealed marvels just beyond the horizon's rim. I'm damn glad I never tapped this realm before, since it provides the kick of novelty and unexpectedness for my old age—and right near home. There's still quite a bit of R. I. that I know much less thoroughly than I do Charleston or Natchez or Florida. If only this genial warmth would last! You'd hardly believe how spry the old man can be! But when the mercury drops I'll be as crumpled up as a dish-rag at Jake's. This is my day . . . . let the other guy do his crowing when I'm shivering and hugging the radiator!

Congrats on the rockonomical honours you're pulling down of late. What did I tell ya? Didn't I say them stones of yours was laid out so swell they'd orta form a goal and model for all live-wire pebbleolatrists? Being chose to deliver words of wisdom to the assembled curatorial sages certainly is worth even such a price as going to Chi at an evil time like this, when the burg is clutter'd up with the magnified hencoops, filling stations, backhouses, petrol tanks, grain-elevators, stationary engines, oil derricks, traffick towers, silos, lunch carts, coal chutes, gallows-trees, and fertiliser factories with which the architectural court-jesters of machine-age barbarism are trying to destroy what little taste the open-mouth'd American booboisie have had since the 1893 fair pulled 'em out of the slough of Victorian chaos and Richardsonian near-Romanesque! Ugh! I don't envy yuh! I wouldn't go near that ash-and-swill-dump of crystallised delirium tremens and apotheosised decadence

even if anybody'd pay my fare and throw in a fair salary besides! Of all aesthetick purgatives and structural emeticks . . . . Grrr . . . yah!

. . . .  
 The trouble with this new fad—which may litter up the country with as many eyesores for the next generation to tear down as the "eclectick" fad did—is that it rests on a theory which *sounds* rather slick when peddled in the abstract. It is all very well to say that buildings should not, as a rule, conspicuously contradict their materials or belie the purposes for which they were made; that their ornaments should not be obtrusive excrescences detracting from natural lines. Fine. But does that precept really explain the boilermakers' nightmares which break out on the landscape under the aegis of modern "functionalism"? Horsefeathers! Cutting out all faddism, nine-tenths of the buildings erected for any given purpose *could not possibly look even remotely like the hashish bells of these addle-pated decadents if there were not a deliberate and wholly unmotivated attempt to eliminate every trace of the familiar and the really beautiful*. This is not natural functionalism—it is merely perverse and self-conscious caprice, as artificial in its way as the most hidebound traditionalism. It is just as artificial to go out of the way to avoid a beauty and homelikeness which would otherwise be instinctively followed, as it is to distort and misrepresent a building in order to follow precedent. If modern structures were built without reference to any purpose save the discharge of their respective functions with a minimum of offence to the eye, they would be infinitely more traditional than anything these goddam bolsheviks would tolerate. And that is why their whole line of bull is a cheap fake. They howl that every age ought to have its own forms—to express itself in its own way. All right. But they know damn well that the real expression of an age must be *spontaneous and unlaboured*—never the fruit of a cut-and-dried propaganda campaign. The riches of the Renaissance and the glory of Gothick were never mapped out in advance and painstakingly pushed on an indifferent or reluctant public through a ridiculous "Modern Architecture Week" or "Functionality Drive". God in heaven, what cowflap! As if this creaking-jointed, cooked-up scheme of Greenwich-Village dupes had anything in common with the imperceptible mass-movements which form the *real* expression of an age!

Suppose this age "ought" to have a unique expression? Well—then let it go ahead and express! Nobody's stopping it . . . . if it doesn't

express anything new it's very obviously because it hasn't anything new to say. Putting fake words artificially into its mouth won't do any good. Such words aren't the true expression of the age at all—any more than we can say that a dumb man talks when a glib ventriloquist makes words seem to come from him. The pinhead *petits-maitres* of the Victorian age also thought they'd make their period freely and originally express itself—and look what they did!

What these moon-gazing droolers can't get into their beans is that not every age produces a new art of its own. Contrary to the Marxolaters who assume that every shift of economic balance must necessarily produce a corresponding shift in aesthetics, it is really only once in a long while that a genuinely fresh art emerges. And when such does emerge, it is not in answer to any theorist's summons, or synchronised with any economic development as wheezed in the gags of Carlo Marx! The plain fact is, that an age of science, mechanics, and commerce is essentially antagonistic to art, and highly unlikely to evoke any new development. Moreover, an art brought to maturity is always more stable than an art in its young and plastic stages. Western civilisation is old. Its recent aspects are not of a sort to inspire fresh aesthetic expression. Nothing has really called forth anything radically new, and there is no reason why any such thing should be called forth. Many of our present forms are distinctly adequate to their purpose, so that they do not call for replacement. Other new forms, evoked through the influence of machinery, can develop most naturally as *branches or modifications* of the existing tradition—with all due allowance for adaptation to function. When anything wholly new is needed, it will appear . . . . but cooking up artificial freaks does nobody any good.

It is utter infantility to claim that the treatment of a mechanically constructed surface with a certain type of harmonious decorative design is "incorrect" merely because the type of design happened to have been evolved in pre-mechanical days. If the design has intrinsic beauty as a stimulus to the eye and a balancer of areas in the composition it is certainly just as correct and effective as any newer type of design, worked out by the modernist gang, could possibly be. No man of sense can study the forms of ornament which the modernists *do* use (for not all of them ignore the deep human instinct for rhythm and pattern flagrantly enough to adopt the functional boiler-factory ideal in all its nitwit purity!) without perceiving that they are certainly no less irrelevant than any traditional form when properly applied. Thus even if we

momentarily grant the modernist's contention that pure geometrical form and utilitarian function—wholly divorced from the associational element—are the sole authentic bases of beauty, we must insist that the traditional, whenever it does not belie function or involve irrelevant lines, is *at least equal* in effectiveness to the radically new. Even this point of view disposes of the fallacy that these freakmongers really gain anything by banishing recognised beauty and courting bizarre ugliness.

However, the sensible disputant need not rest here. It is proper for him to call the modernist's bluff on the whole larger question of the *nature of beauty itself*. The modernist's case rests utterly and pathetically on the flimsy faddist assumption that true beauty is a perfectly simple and definite thing—a geometrical property based wholly on abstract arrangements and entirely independent of all associative factors. Only this fantastic assumption can justify the sponsoring of an alleged "art" in which the poignant, potent element of memory-recalling is entirely absent. According to these moderns, art has no business trying to make its spectators feel at home and harmonised with the universe by suggesting previous impressions, recalling previous emotions, or orienting the present with the past. Man, they claim, can be touched just as deeply and richly by totally unaccustomed stimuli as by those familiar and reminiscent stimuli which he can coördinate with his stream of cultural memories and emotional experiences. In a word, the hypothetical modern man is a parvenu bastard without antecedents or memories, and with merely a tabula rasa of abstract receptivities to be formally titillated by mathematical harmonies or "ideologically propagandised" (as the Little Belknap of 1932-3 would put it) with scientific utilitarianism or social and economic theory. A gas house or motor 'bus can be as beautiful as a temple or a galleon . . . . a public library might just as well look like a smallpox hospital as like a library . . . . a house is simply a "living machine" to allow the inhabitants to sleep and feed and keep warm with maximum physiological and economic efficiency, and has nothing to do with satisfying emotional yearnings or pleasing the sense of harmony, continuity, and memory-fulfillment inherent in man.

Well—that's what they say . . . but any adult who keeps his head level amidst the charlatanic hullabaloo can see what perfect damned crap this whole bolshevik attitude is. All that man is, is the sum of his memories—personal and cultural—and no art could have even a modicum of genuineness or vitality if it did not draw upon the past or find its roots in previous and long-accustomed forms and ways. Every great



art tradition which has ever existed—even when most seemingly different from what it superseded—has drawn primarily on antecedent and familiar elements. It may have given these elements a fresh synthesis, but it has never failed to preserve enough to give the emotions a genuine and substantial foothold. Anybody who claims that (for example) the Grecian temple or the Gothick cathedral was as sudden and rootless an architect's dream as the tool-sheds and standpipes of the Chicago Century of Mechanical Tail-Chasing is simply talking through his hat. The whole basis of this radical ballyhoo is as insubstantially windy as the farts of a bean-swilling nigger. To hell with it!

.....  
 ... *Civilisation* means settledness, harmony, leisure, and the preservation of the accumulated heritage of memories which alone gives life the sanity-saving illusions of significance, direction, and interest. It means the enthronement of *permanence* and *quality*, and the crushing of the speed-quantity-commerce octopus that preys on its vitals. Its natural mood is one of *continuity*, and its natural language is that of an art with roots and memories. Against this real civilisation, and egging on the natural and already dangerous-enough disintegrative forces of utilitarianism and wholesale mechanisation, is arrayed the architectural epilepsy and cultural hysteria of Chicago's Cycle of Shoddy Practicality and Century of post-Antonine Decline. I spit upon it as a friend of civilised mankind and all that civilised mankind has built up in ten thousand years.

Yrs. for the old ways—  
 Father Theobaldus

627. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Onyx Sea-Cliffs of Kho—  
 Hour when low tide bares that daemon-  
 carven reef wherefrom men avert their glance ...  
 June 14, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

.....  
 Glancing the other day at the book next the Nameless Eikon, I found myself reading in a highly peculiar fashion—picking out words from

odd and unrelated places in the text, as if led to them by some invisible influence. At length a vague hint of some obscure meaning began to develop. The words united to evoke a cloudy, indeterminate vision. A certain *memory* welled up—and shrieking, I dropt the volume *while there was yet time*.

Yrs. in the ritual of the Unnamed Planet—  
 E'ch-Pi-El

628. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

66 College St.,  
 Providence, R. I.,  
 June 18, 1933.

Dear Mr. Wright:—

Thanks for the sheets—I wish I had asked for proofs, since there are at least six slips in the text; three occurring in the manuscript (which I ought to have gone over more thoroughly) and the balance made by the printer.

#### ERRATA

- (a)—p. 92, col. 1.—l. 11:—for *love* read *lore* (printer's error)
- (b)—p. 93, col. 1.—l. 11:—for *the doctor's* read *a doctor's* (error in manuscript)
- (c)—p. 93, col. 2.—l. 39:—for *his* read *its* (error in manuscript)
- (d)—p. 100, col. 2.—l. 41:—for *Desrocher's* read *Desrochers'* (printer's error)
- (e)—p. 101, col. 2.—l. 25:—for *human element* read *known element* (printer's error)
- (f)—p. 102, col. 2.—l. 35:—for *hearty-sleeping* read *heavily-sleeping* (error in manuscript)

The worst two are (a) and (e), which make the rest sound like vapid nonsense. The most damnable kind of a misprint is that which does not *look* like an error, but which gives a false appearance of sense—though really misrepresenting the author's intention and sometimes making him appear responsible for unutterable vapidities. A slip like that in Klarkash-Ton's *Ubbo-Satbla* (*palaegean* for *palaeogena*) hurts nobody, for it is *obviously* a mistake of the printer. But where an allusion to *magical*

lore becomes, seemingly a coherent yet inanely meaningless allusion to magical "love"—or where the expression *known (chemical) element* seems to be the coherent but out-of-place phrase "*human*" element—the author is unjustly laid open to the suspicion of rambling feebleness and semi-illiteracy. I wish there were a way of getting these two errata indicated on the cards to be sent friends.

....

I shall certainly send along any tales of mine which may seem to suit your ideas of length and content. Recently I have had no time for original composition, though I did perform one piece of collaboration with our brilliant friend Malik Taus, the Peacock Sultan—the results of which he will probably forward for your editorial attention before many weeks have flown. .... If I were editing *Weird Tales*, I'd accept virtually all of the Klarkash-Ton items which meet disfavour because of their allegedly too-poetic quality .... which reminds me, I suppose C. A. S. has sent you a copy of the brochure printed for him by the *Auburn Journal*. To my mind this is a collection of extraordinary merit—and I have an idea that its sale may belie many popular notions about the unmarketability of poetic phantasy. I have offered to enclose circulars of it to all my correspondents. It is certainly a marvellous value for a quarter—despite the crowded format and the typically careless typography of the *Journal's* job press. I think C. A. S. means to advertise it in *Weird Tales*.

.....

Before I forget it—Walter J. Coates, North Montpelier, Vt., wants to know how much a small advertisement in *Weird Tales* would be. He has taken over the loose sheets of my *Shunned House* booklet—printed by W. Paul Cook five years ago—and proposes to bind and attempt to market the edition, aided in part by his editorship of *Driftwind* and his proprietorship of the semi-amateur *Driftwind Press*. If not too expensive, he would like to reach your readers.

.....

Yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servt.,  
H. P. L.

629. TO ALFRED GALPIN

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
June 24, 1933.

Son:—

..... Let me narrate the current bad news—news of that which has completely spoilt the summer for my aunt—and indirectly, for me.

On June 14, before the complete settlement of our new abode, my aunt broke her ankle through a slip on the stairs while descending to answer the doorbell during my absence. Doctors .... Ambulance to R. I. Hospital .... X-Ray .... setting under ether .... plaster cast .... room in Ward K .... prospect of being in bed six weeks and on crutches several more .... and a financial strain utterly ruinous to us at the present juncture! Such is life. Of course there is no danger of actual illness, but the restriction to bed is accursedly unpleasant and productive of backaches. After another week my aunt will probably be brought home with a nurse. She reads, writes notes, and eats fairly well—very well, in fact, today. I call at the hospital each afternoon. Naturally the disaster has kept me overwhelmingly busy—with the house in its unsettled state and everything in the air—and it is very unlikely that I can accompany W. Paul Cook to the N. A. P. A. Convention in New York (July 3-4-5) as originally planned. I was going to stay with Sonny Belknap—in fact, the Longs had postponed a contemplated trip to Asbury Park on my account—but I fancy I had better tell him not to expect the Old Man. The Convention promises to be one of more than average interest and activity.

But about 66 College St. The one overwhelming thing from my point of view—and you know what an architectural antiquarian and general 18th century relique your Grandpa is—is that the home *is a colonial one!* All my long life I have been enthralled by the mellow old Georgian houses on Providence's ancient hill. Nothing else on earth has so deeply coloured my imagination or so persistently woven itself into my dreams. Never had I lived in one, yet always did I long to do so. And now, at last, I *am* living in one! Pure luck. What we sought was



cheapness plus practical convenience—yet through some fantastically fortunate miracle the cheapest and most practical thing *was colonial* . . . . the sort of place I'd pay any price for if I had the money. And, to complete the miracle, no sacrifice of neighbourhood quality was involv'd. The locality is predominately collegiate, with the business district surprisingly close—yet far, far down the steep precipice which divides the city into two separate worlds. The main Brown campus with its great clock tower can be seen from our easterly windows, and a goodly quota of our neighbours are fraternity-houses. . . .

The sensation of actually living in such a place is indescribably fascinating. . . . Now the desperate problem is how to hang on to it! My aunt has always been the family banker, but now that she is down I have charge of all papers and accounts, and can see in stark plainness the utter desperateness of our financial situation. With the bottom completely out of revision, and with no knack whatever for commercial fiction, I am certainly up against a stone wall as to how to get the cash to keep alive. No one ever had less instinctive aptitude or experience in the cryptic and devious ways of money-making . . . unless it be Little Belknap.

I am glad to learn of your debut as a gentleman-agriculturist, and trust that a rich harvest may drown your ploughing and sowing. The eternal soil and its immemorial ways have ever form'd for me a subject of the most intense attraction and admiration; indeed, I am convinc'd that these customs, perspectives, and imaginative reactions which do most to lend the illusions of direction, interest, significance, and purpose to the formless chaos of human existence, are those which spring-most directly from man's primitive relationship to the earth, its bounties, its cultivation, and its vary'd phenomena. When agriculture is totally left behind, there grows up about life a sense of instability, artificiality, and ultimate meaninglessness (born of a separation from the visibly eternal and cyclick processes of Nature) which cannot but be destructive of the best qualities of civilisation. I agree largely with the eminent Spengler when he affirms, that an agrarian aristocracy is the best form of social organisation possible to mankind. Whilst I have not a personal aptitude for the operations of pastoral and agrestick life, I delight in the ancient tradition of country squirearchy, and in my close ancestral connection with it. . . .

. . . . . Most of my nearly 43 years in New England I have spent in semi-numbness and shivering from the rarely-interrupted cold . . . . . as you can well appreciate from remembering how the poor old man shiver'd in Cleveland back in '22 when the five o'clock lake breeze began to rattle the library windows!

Ah, me—good old 1922 . . . . . and what hath time done to the various oddly-assorted figures that knocked about 1537 E. 93 St., 9231 Birchdale, Wade Park, Clark's Lunch, Taylor's Arcade, Elgin's, and all the other half-fabulous landmarks! Despair and the black caves of the sea-bottom for one, for others mediocrity and merging with the crowd, for some progress and growth, for still others a sort of changeless crystallisation, and for a few a stagnation temper'd only by the loss of certain major crudities and inexperience'd errors of judgment. How vary'd are the effects of time upon differing types and temperaments!

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
Grandpa.

630. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Field of the Ultra-Spectral Rays—  
Hour of the Spiral Wind from Nith  
June 29, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

The hand that indites these words trembles with a decay that is not of years alone, and the haggard face above the page is shrivelled with a thousand lines of horror that were not there two nights ago. For . . . . and may God help me . . . . . *I looked with a mirror's aid at a passage in that crumbling tome of elder lore which stands next the Nameless Eikon!* Now—in spite of all of Heaven's vaunted mercy—I *know*. The veil is withdrawn . . . . and I have glimpsed that which has bowed me in convulsive terror for the few days or weeks of life which remain to me. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! Is the Grey Rite of Azathoth no more of avail?

Well—I have read the brochure through now, and can truthfully say that each of the tales retains all its original appeal for me. Indeed—I think *The Devotee of Evil* is even stronger than before, though I cannot

quite put my finger on the seat of the change. My favourites, I think are *The Double Shadow*, *The Maze of the Enchanter*, and *A Night in Malnéant*—though it is indeed hard to assign the other three a lesser status. The whole thing is really magnificent—and a marvellous value for a quarter. I hope the sale will remain steady if not spectacular. I have now distributed quite a number of the circulars, and believe that at least a few of these will result in sales. One sale of *Ebony and Crystal* is also virtually assured. The very reasonable price of the booklet will help its sale—people will fork over a quarter when they wouldn't be so apt to spend a dollar or two. I hope Coates will be wise enough to bind *The Shunned House* cheaply and whittle the price down to a minimum—it would be silly to charge a dollar for one mediocre tale (solely on the strength of typography, paper, and binding) when you are offering *six excellent tales for only a fourth* of that sum. Some day I may try *Innsmouth* and *The Mountains* as a booklet, but I can't afford any risks now. As for my earlier rejected tales—I'm beginning to agree with Wright about them, and am not at all sure that I wish them to appear. Even my old favourite *The Nameless City* looked pretty naive and shoddy to me the last time I re-read it.

My ancient quarters continue to fascinate me, and one feature of the centuried attic almost arouses me to tenebrous fiction. This is the narrow and hideously nighted space in the attic under the eaves—reached from the attic proper by low doors, and having no windows whatever. A man—or an entity not entirely a man—could crawl in there and lurk for years . . . or centuries . . . unsuspected. One can see in only a few inches beyond the squat, black apertures—and *one is not tempted to explore further*. So far as I know, no *living* person has been or looked through the full extent of that black space for 100 or 130 years . . . . . *but is it wholly untenanted?* I am wholly alone in the house now, with my aunt at the hospital and the downstairs neighbour on the high seas bound for Germany—but *what was that creaking above me last night?* Part of that black space is directly over my desk. Perhaps it was only the rats—I hope so—yet I have seen no rats, nor any evidence of them, since coming here. *Is it right for so ancient a house to have no rats?* Is there anything that rats are afraid of? Hark! . . . . . *what is that?* Precisely overhead . . . . . *do rats tramp and pace in measured, sinisterly deliberate steps?* . . . . . God! . . . . . The Elder Sign! . . . . .

Yrs. for the Exorcism of Iagsat—  
E'ch-Pi-El

631. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Abode of Colonial Antiquity—  
Nones of Quintilis  
(July 7, 1933)

Vertex of Vivifying Virtuosity:—

Possibly Culinarius told you of my recent guest—Malik Taus, the Peacock Sultan, otherwise known to fame as Edgar Hoffmann Price. You must know his frequent Orientales in *Weird Tales*. He is visiting in Irvington, New York; and though too busy to do much socialising in N. Y. City, stole four days from his work to give archaick Providentium (which he'd never seen before) the once-over. Young Brobst came over twice during his stay, and made a very congenial third in our literary and philosophical discussions. We had one all-night session—mostly spent in reading and criticising a single story. . .

Price had his car—a rattletrap 1928 Ford—which enabled me to shew him more of the country than I could otherwise have done. Indeed, his interest and courtesy enabled me to see many inaccessible regions which I had myself never seen before despite a lifetime's residence in these parts. You may recall my mentioning the "Narragansett Country" south of Wickford and west of the bay, otherwise known to fame as the "South County" (actually, King's County, known since the late unfortunate rebellion as Washington County). This is the region where the plantation system existed as in the South—with large estates, many blacks, a Church-of-England culture, and an agricultural basis centreing in horse-breeding and dairying. In the good old days before the tragedy of 1775-83 Narragansett pacers and Narragansett cheeses were famous in all the world's markets . . . cheu fugaces . . . God Save the King! It was to this region that Newport—across the bay—formed "the town" . . . . indeed, I recall pointing out to you in antient Water Street the town houses of several Narragansett planters. About one-third of my ancestry comes from the Narragansett country—Phillips, Place, Hazard, Wilcox, Casey, Dyer, etc. It had long irked me that I had never seen the choicest spots of this territory, yet the non-possession of a coach and a reluctance to impose on others led me to postpone my explorations—there being no publick conveyances penetrating these fastnesses



of the past. We saw the *edge* of the South County at Wickford—but the core remained untouch'd.

Well—Price unlock'd for me the long-wish'd wonderland. And what a land it is! Winding roads, stone walls, verdant slopes and meads, shadowy woods, embower'd cots and villages and steeples, shimmering streams and azure meres, stately mansions, venerable water-mills, breath-taking prospects—all the loveliness and wholesomeness of a real civilisation as contrasted with the offal and miasma of mechanised, quantitative, democrattick modernity. We visited the antient snuff-mill where the late eminent painter, Gilbert Stuart, Esq., was born, and spent some time at the great Rowland Robinson house (1705) amidst its gigantick willows, where a country-gentleman of vast urbanity shew'd us the interior as well as the exterior. The Robinsons are an offshoot of the Hazards, and so value the connexion that they have always had over the door the heraldick escallop of the Hazard arms . . . . a thing which, I may reflect with satisfaction, belongs to me as much as to them. The Robinson house is the *last* unchanged example of our South-County plantation-houses—a type which did not emulate the plantation architecture of any part of the South, but which employ'd the true New-England gambrel form on an unprecedentedly large scale. Another place we visited was the glebe-long-deserted rectory of Dr. MacSparran, who presided over that white church in Wickford (mov'd up from a rural spot five miles below) which I shew'd you some years ago. Its dank, shadowy courtyards, lushly overgrown with vines and briars, have a spectral and almost sinister aspect. On the hill above it is Hannah Robinson's Rock (about which a story clings), commanding the finest rural prospect I have anywhere seen—miles of coiling river, mead and forest, distant white church on a headland, shining, mystical, far-off sea . . . . oh, boy! you'll have to hire a bicycle or tin lizzie and see it some day! But the climax was Kingston village—a veritable inland Marblehead, dizzying in its unspoiled colonial beauty, and *never before seen* by me. On the way back I blew Price to a typical R. I. clam dinner at antient Pawtuxet . . . . and later stopt at a Waldorf to tank up myself.

Yrs. for the past—  
Theobaldus

## 632. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Colonial Shades of #66  
July 22, 1933

Jonckheer:—

Well, well, well, son—Grandpa sure is glad to hear that the Dutch-Yankee article\*\* suited your requirements so aptly! Hope your secretary-censor will have an equally kind opinion. As I said before—change as much or as little as you like. Never mind my spelling—I believe all magazines and papers have their "style sheet" of individual usage, to which all contributions are made to conform. . . . .

Yr. obt. hble. Servt.,  
Patrus O'Casey

## 633. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
July 24-31 and August 5, 1933.

Dear R E H:—

. . . On June 14th my aunt broke her right ankle while descending the stairs to answer the doorbell during my absence, and has since been confined to bed with the injured member in a heavy plaster cast. She was at the hospital for three weeks, and is now at home with a nurse in constant attendance. For the past few days she has sat up a bit in the afternoon, and in about another week the cast can come off—allowing her to be up and around on crutches. How soon she can walk freely is still doubtful—it won't be till autumn, at any rate. Truly, a delightful sort of housewarming! This matter has tied me up considerably, since

\*\* "Some Dutch Footprints in New England," later published in the Holland Society's *De Halve Maen*.

I have to be here on duty every afternoon while the nurse goes out—except by special arrangement. When my aunt is up and the nurse goes, I shall be even more tied—for on account of my aunt's inability to get down stairs I shall have to be constantly on hand to answer the doorbell. I have had to forego all long trips, though certain short ones have proved of interest—and I have had quite a number of exceedingly pleasant visitors. Today I hope to get to Onset, near Cape Cod, where Frank B. Long and his parents are spending some time. I shall stay over tomorrow (perhaps accompanying the Longs on a motor trip to Provincetown) and return Wednesday morning, when my hosts will start back for New York.

I wish you luck with your British collection of stories. Possibly a collection of mine might have more of a chance in Great Britain than here. Glad you enjoyed the *Witch House* and *Museum* story. Another tale which I revised for the "Museum" author,\*\* and which Wright has accepted, brings in von Junzt and his Black Book as almost the central theme. It concerns a mummy found in the crypt of a Cyclopean stone temple of fabulous antiquity, volcanically upheaved from the sea. Of late my programme has been too feverishly crowded to permit me to write anything new, but I hope to get things more under control later on. . . .

Harking back to the matter of the place of aesthetic development in life—a good many confusing definitions on both sides are undoubtedly involved. No one has ever claimed that the artist is more important in the maintenance of some sort of civilisation than is the farmer, mechanic, engineer, or statesman. It is, on the other hand, generally recognised that these possibly simpler types are supremely necessary to the preservation of that well-ordered material fabric which underlies a high civilisation. That much is axiomatic. However, when we consider the vast enlargement of life made possible by the expansion of the personality under the influence of art; and realise how infinitely more worth living is a life enriched by such an expansion; we are certainly justified in censuring any civilisation which does not favour this process.

\*\* The two revisions mentioned here are *The Horror in the Museum* and *Out of the Eons*, by Hazel Heald.

It is not that we regard art or any other thing in life as "sacred", but that we recognise the importance of something which naturally forms the chief life-interest of the most highly evolved types. Art certainly *is* more intrinsically removed from the unevolved protoplasmic stage of organic reaction than any other human manifestation except pure reason—hence our grouping of it as one of the "highest" things in life. By "highest" we do not mean "most important to survival", but simply "most advanced in intrinsic development." There is no attempt on the part of rational thinkers to give art (or anything else) a "cosmic significance"—the case is merely one of recognising a certain degree of removal from the amoebal stage. . . .

Regarding politics and sociology—the utter complexity of human nature, and the tremendous doubtfulness and variability of all social problems, make it impossible and unscientific to be dogmatic on any point. All the individual knows is that he is here—on this planet, with his own fortunes to carve out. His problem is simply how to make the tedious ordeal of living most worth enduring for himself—and to this end he must consider all sorts of systems of grouping with other individuals, tracing out their probable ultimate effects upon him. This task is complicated by the fact that many different natural types of human being exist, so that the "best" system for one type does not always coincide with the "best" system envisaged by another type. The result of this diversity is of course a ceaseless struggle—perhaps to be later abated when a clearer general knowledge teaches methods of compromise whereby the ends of each type may be achieved with a minimum of encroachment on other types. My own views of social organisation change constantly as new evidence and fresh trends appear from year to year—the only persistent factor being my settled conviction that the best civilisation is that which gives the freest play and greatest encouragement to the highest (i. e., most evolved) attributes of mankind. I have no *class* sympathies whatsoever, since I do not believe in classes except as temporary and accidental phenomena. All I sympathise with is *excellence in the individual*—for after all, *the individual is the only basic human reality*. "Mankind" is a mere myth or working hypothesis—but *individual men* are actualities to be dealt with. The effect of my position is to make me rather an outlaw among all groups of orthodox social and political thinkers. Proletarians and democrats curse me for upholding a standard of civilisation which *accidents of previous history* have identi-



fied with the artificial and temporary institution of aristocracy; whilst aristocrats and plutocrats curse me just as loudly for my lack of enthusiasm for the arbitrary barriers and inequalities of resource-distribution which *they* believe to underlie all high standards and true civilisation. Between the two groups I am absolutely impartial, since I think in terms of neither. I think only as an individual.

Regarding the various social devices roughly grouped together under the head of "special privilege"—I am not disposed to lay down any arbitrary or blanket laws. We must remember that the abstract and rigid thing called "justice" is only an illusion, and that an entire group may often profit in the end by allowing certain advantages to a few advanced members. This is a question where blind fanaticism has no place—we must neither love nor hate, but simply *reason* coolly and far-seeingly. Actually, there are fields where all arbitrary preference is indeed definitely out of place. It is grotesque and impracticable, for example, that either birth or wealth should affect any individual's opportunities for advancement; or that carelessly determined groups should be allowed to monopolise resources and wield disproportionate power. On the other hand, it seems to me equally foolish that a man's intrinsic development should not win him definite advantages in the social order—especially as concerns the exercise of *power*. This, it may be added, is as much for the sake of the social order as for that of the individuals concerned; since it is obvious that our complex and mechanised society can never be properly governed—or even comprehended—except by the minority of highly endowed (in point of natural intelligence and strength of character) and intensively trained (in problems of science, administration, economics, etc.) products of sound breeding and thorough education. There is no doubt in my mind but that the cultural norm of any nation ought to be as high as possible, and that all participation in government ought to be restricted to those who can pass rigid examinations in natural aptitude and acquired comprehension of political science. Modern problems are too intricate to be handled by any other sort of person—I myself, for example, am so ignorant of economics, engineering, finance, and other basic governmental essentials, that no really enlightened nation ought to allow me to vote or hold office. What is more—we now understand so well the suicidal deadlocks caused by the diffusion of authority among many individuals (no matter how well qualified each may be), that we are forced to recognise the

need of compact and highly centralised dictatorships in the increasingly complex world of the future. Even with the choicest kind of an electorate we cannot hope for effective government unless the vital matters of immediate policy are in the hands of a well-ordered group empowered to take action without delay or cumbrous consultations and agreements. Parliamentarianism—the child of the Middle Ages—is helpless before the problems of the machine age. The best we can do is to have a choice electorate select a very few powerful officials for terms of reasonable length, giving them a free rein except when basic national aspirations seem likely to be contravened. Not only is this necessary to ensure the survival of the whole group, but it is likewise the only way whereby the average or humble individual can be assured of a chance for a decent life and normal opportunities. We know now that under the machine age any policy of laissez-faire individualism means only the crushing and starvation of the weak or unlucky man, and the corresponding concentration of wealth among the minority of strong and lucky men . . . . . and nothing but a highly intelligent dictatorship can ever evolve and enforce anything so complex and delicate as a planned economy and deliberate allocation of resources.

.....  
Morton's visit held up my correspondence, but we had a damned good time. Aside from our continual and congenial debating we took many rural walks and antiquarian pilgrimages, on one occasion seeing an ancient well with great wooden sweep . . . . from which we paused to drink in memory of the past. This walk ended up at Greenville, an unspoiled village which holds much of the atmosphere of the 1820 period. Another time we visited the colonial seaport of Warren, down the East shore of the bay—incidentally stopping at a place (quite a rendezvous of our gang) where 28 varieties of ice cream are sold. We had six varieties apiece—my choices being grape, chocolate chip, macaroon, cherry, banana, and orange-pineapple. Afterward we walked south to Bristol, another quaint 18th century seaport. Still another trip was to old Pawtuxet—where, as with Price, I watched Morton eat a shore dinner. On the last day of the visit we took a boat trip to Newport—spending most of our time on the rugged sea-cliffs. The enclosed card will give you some idea of the rocks and surf on which we looked down from our exalted perch—a perch which 200 years ago was a favourite of Dean (later Bishop) Berkeley as he composed his famous *Alciphron*,

or, *The Minute Philosopher*. We had splendidly hot weather all along—thermometer around 90°—though Morton didn't appreciate this bounty of Nature as much as I did. Now it has turned cool again, and I shiver wistfully. From here Morton goes to Vermont and New Hampshire to climb mountains.

My aunt's plaster cast was removed Thursday night, but the doctor says she must remain in bed for a week more. I am still largely tied down, and shall probably be so till winter . . . when liberty is of no use to me! Had an invitation to New Hampshire, but will probably have to decline.

Had a letter from the Knopf firm yesterday, asking to see a few of my tales with a view to possible book publication. I sent about seven—though after my experience with Putnam's and the Viking Press I realise how little such requests mean. These fellows are merely scouting around to make sure that they don't miss anything good—but they don't really want the kind of stuff I write. Sooner or later this batch will come back with the usual polite regrets.

.....  
In reading over your summary of your side of our debate I am impressed with the fact that we are beginning to understand more of each other's positions. After all, the major differences are purely matters of different emotions—as fortuitously determined by temperament and environmental accident. If I were to make a similar summary of my own position, I suppose it would run something like this:

- I. I value aesthetic and intellectual activities highly because they are beyond doubt an expression of the most thoroughly evolved part of the human personality.
- II. I value civilisation above barbarism because I feel that it utilises human personality to the full instead of involving a waste of man's most highly evolved faculties.
- III. I think that the most precious possession of a highly evolved man is his freedom of thought and expression; and that conversely the worst hardship he can suffer is a curtailment of that freedom, either through overt censorship or through the obligation of writing insincere material to suit commercial editors.

.....

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
H P L

634. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
July 26, 1933

Dear Miss Sully:—

..... I hope you saw quaint *Rockport* (where the 1812 cannon-ball is embedded in the church belfrey) & the striking sea-cliffs of Magnolia—with the yawning abyss of Rafe's Chasm. The Sargeant & c. house must have given you an excellent idea of a typical middle-period colonial interior—as some houses in Prov. & Newport would have done had it been possible to explore them. The powdering-closets must have seemed odd—though they were quite frequent in Georgian mansions of the better grade. The discovery of some Sully portraits must surely have given you a thrill of pride. Incidentally, you possibly knew that Thomas Sully's nephew Robert (himself an artist of no mean attainments) was a favourite boyhood playmate of *Poe's* in Richmond. I have often seen the high wooded bluff at the end of Clay St., (where the "White House of the Confederacy" stands) where Poe & Bob Sully & Tom Bolling used to play in the early 1820's, when Shockoe Creek (now filled in & replaced by a cobblestoned street frequented by motor trucks) used to flow along its base. I hope you explored the old Ellery house at the edge of Gloucester, in order to grasp the atmosphere of the very early—17th century—homes which preceded the Georgian mansions. I likewise hope that you managed to catch a glimpse of Newburyport & Portsmouth—if only from coach windows. The sea trip was a splendid supplement to any land itinerary—ininitely typical of maritime Gloucester. I've never had such an opportunity.

Too bad your hosts were so merged in the quasi-artistic, heavily disillusioned fabric of self-conscious modernity. This fantastic, irresponsible world of aimless scepticism & "the modern temper" is peculiarly irritating to one with still-valid roots—yet one is compelled to admit that inevitable historic conditions have done much to force such an attitude upon all thinking persons who happen to lack certain emotional anchorages or faculties for exercising a sense of proportion. As-



surely, the increased knowledge of the external world, & of mankind's own nature & motivations, which the science of the past hundred years has brought, has annihilated completely the old set of explanations, assumed *absolute* values, taken-for-granted goals, & conceptions of man's relationship to the infinite cosmos of time & space, on which many of our feelings, interests, standards, & expectations formerly rested. This being so, it is only natural that some bewildered souls should give themselves over utterly to weary, directionless drifting, while others try to find new bases for values & develop capricious, fanatical dogmatisms (like bolshevism & its whole ideology) upon vague postulates which are really quite as unreal as the set just discarded. For my part, I do not believe that any *absolute values* exist; but on the other hand, I cannot help noting that certain types of *attitude*—harmonisation with patterns & backgrounds which long familiarity has raised to the status of a workable (even if fortuitous & illusory) system of reference-points—invariably conduce (even when consciously adopted or preserved without reference to foundation in cosmic truth) toward an adjustment of the individual to his environment which is distinctly less painful (because it preserves to a great extent the illusions of direction, meaning, & interest in life) than any other possible adjustment would seem to be. Thus I am a complete sceptic & a thorough conservative at the same time. My attitude toward a traditional value is to hang on to it (as an aesthetic act) as long as possible, *if it is not positively anti-social* as judged by the most genuine & permanent factors in human happiness & welfare. So far as I can see, the destruction of values leads only to a net impoverishment of life; since new values of *real, subconscious validity* cannot be created overnight (& would be no more absolutely well-founded than the old ones if they could be created), while an existence without values is definitely & demonstrably unsatisfying to man's permanent emotions. Pardon philosophical garrulity—but this is the sort of thing Belknap & I continually fight about, & I am still in training from the 2½-days' battle just concluded! (or rather *suspended*.)

Yr obt Servt

HPL

635. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
July 28, 1933.

Dear Morse:—

*The Horror in the Museum*—a piece which I “ghost-wrote” for a client from a synopsis so poor that I well-nigh discarded it—is virtually my own work. Glad you found it entertaining. There will be two more Heald tales equally dependent on my pen.

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—  
HPL

636. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Bench in Roger Williams Park  
—July 30, 1933

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

..... Regarding experience in life—certainly a writer can use all he can get, & a good amount of *general* experience (i.e., firsthand familiarity with the way in which average people react to average situations) is really essential to any realist. The trouble with Long is that he lacks this general experience. But I still think that all the specific *detailed* experiences you mention are more or less in the minor class. They involve what are relatively trifles in the whole human panorama—for it is only the false taste of a decadent age which gives them the prominence they have in current fiction. By the way—your morgue glimpse must have been picturesque. Hope the second & more intimate glimpse will be fruitful in literary stimuli.

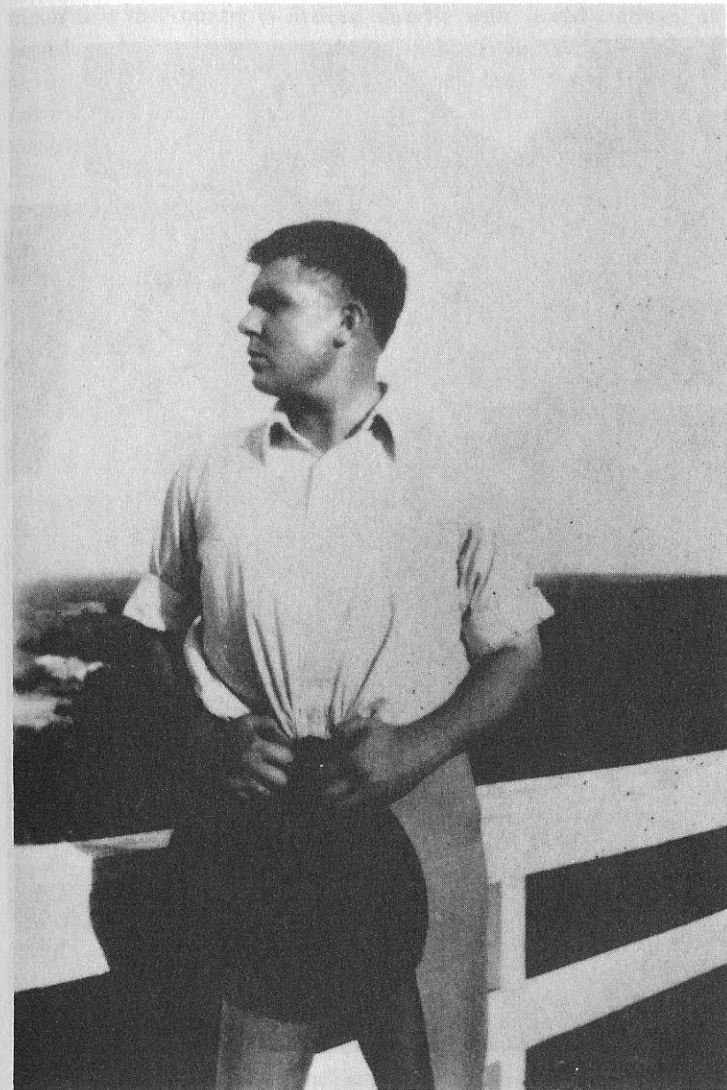
.....  
Your *To Love a Faun* certainly looks as if it would be a highly ambitious production. As for the right town to use— it seems to me that nothing save impartial objectivity is suitable for any serious fiction. Draw the character as you conceive it—without either sympathy or

repulsion, & with no departure from the confusing mixture of qualities which typifies a real person as distinguished from an artificial literary puppet. Never mind if the character doesn't seem either fish, flesh, or fowl—what real person *is* definitely any one of these things? Pay no attention to the reader. Real art has only two factors—the creator & his material. If you fear autobiographical identification, you could easily dispose of that matter in a prefatory note—which could be made to sound not too naive. What you say of your proposed method seems sound enough—though you might do some reflecting before concentrating so much attention on your central character. After all, no one person is especially important—& a section of life is really an aimless jumble with all the actors hopelessly mixed up. On the other hand, every person lives largely in a world of his own which no one else can share, & in which all the characters are coloured by the imagination of the person himself. Such a personal world, seen from the inside, is certainly appropriate material for literary treatment—so perhaps your idea is the right one after all. Your choice of a special abnormal type as protagonist (a typical beginner's choice in this decadent age) necessarily limits the work to the minor field—but after all, a first novel can hardly expect to transcend the minor class in any case. Life as a whole is something which only wide experience plus chronological maturity can grasp—& which even these can grasp damn seldom!

.....

As for the negro question—I think that intermarriage ought to be banned in view of the vast number of blacks in the country. Illicit miscegenation by the white male is bad enough, heaven knows—but at least the hybrid offspring is kept below a definite colour-line & kept from vitiating the main stock. Nothing but pain & disaster can come from the mingling of black & white, & the law ought to aid in checking this criminal folly. Granting the negro his full due, he is not the sort of material which can mix successfully into the fabric of a civilised Caucasian nation. Isolated cases of high-grade hybrids prove nothing. It is easy to see the ultimate result of the wholesale pollution of highly evolved blood by definitely inferior strains. It happened in ancient Egypt —& made a race of supine fellaheen out of what was once a noble stock.

..... As for New York—there is no question but that its overwhelming Semitism has totally removed it from the American stream. Regarding its influence on literary & dramatic expression—it is not so



Robert E. Howard





E. Hoffmann Price

much that the country is flooded directly with Jewish authors, as that Jewish publishers determine just which of our Aryan writers shall achieve print & position. That means that those of us who least express our own people have the preference. Taste is insidiously moulded along non-Aryan lines—so that, no matter how intrinsically good the resulting body of literature may be, it is a special, rootless literature which does not represent us. The feelings & ideals presented are not our feelings & ideals—so that today our newer authors are as exotic to us as the French symbolists or Japanese hokku-writers. This, of course, applies to literature *as a whole*. Naturally, a good deal of representative stuff manages to get published. It is not difficult to point out what is meant by this insidious exoticism. What is happening is that books are *preferred* when they reflect an emotional attitude toward life which is profoundly foreign to the race as a whole. The preferred writers are detailedly interested in things which do not interest us, & are callous to the real impulses & aspirations which move us most. Anderson & Faulkner, delving in certain restricted strata, seldom touch on any chord to which the reader personally responds. We recognise their art, but admire them at a distance—as we admire Turgenev & Baudelaire. Whether our own representative authors do as well in their art as their foreign-influenced types is beside the question. If they do not—as is entirely possible—then the thing to do is to stimulate better & freer expression among them; not to turn away from them & encourage expression in exotic fields. This can be done without injustice to the admitted intrinsic excellence of the exotics & decadents.

As for the "colonial tradition" & others—the one really sound course is for each individual writer to forget all about "schools" & "traditions", & simply write what is in him in the best way he knows how. It is merely an incidental matter that he will probably find the methods & perspectives of his own ancestors best suited to him. Of course a geographical, social, & political setting differing from the ancestral pattern will naturally produce variations—but as soon as these variations eclipse the thread of continuity the net result is bound to suffer. A great deal of the non-English trend in American writing is simply a matter of illiteracy, slovenliness, eccentricity, affectation & confusing foreign influence. Good books in this medium are good not because of their departures from tradition but in spite of it. There is no real difference between the language of cultivated persons in England & America.

When we represent the speech of local characters, we must observe a photographic accuracy of dialect; but serious third-person writing knows no national boundaries.

As for the proper course for a young writer—I would say that it is to forget all about time & place, to assimilate all that is soundest throughout the literature of his ancestors, & to express what he has to say in that manner which his background-knowledge impels him to regard as most powerful & artistic. That is what I have tried to do. You err when you assume that I follow the style of my chronological generation. As a matter of fact, my style is largely that of many generations before my own lifetime. I cannot conceive of any really literate person *choosing* the crude, barren, & altogether inadequate manner followed by the most popular writers of today. These writers represent powerful minds handicapped by certain cultural inadequacies—and it is our business to emulate their power, not their handicaps.

.....

Yr obt hble Servt  
E'ch-Pi-El

637. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

Aug. 6, 1933

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

However—don't bother with weird fiction at all unless you feel a genuine inclination toward it. It is the most difficult of all material to market professionally, & the circle of those who truly enjoy & appreciate it is always discouragingly small. The only reason I write it is that I virtually can't help it—weirdness & phantasy having fascinated me more than anything else (except perhaps antiquarianism in general, as expressed in architecture & other glamorous survivals of the past) ever since I could walk or talk. It is virtually the only field in which I have anything to say fictionally—hence my restriction to it is scarcely a matter of choice. The demand for weird fiction is always faint & narrow, & on the higher literary levels is so interwoven with special conventions & restrictions that the spontaneous & unconventional writer has scarcely any chance. Again & again I have had some publisher ask to see my stuff with a view to book publication—and then fling it back with a polite note

of regret. Just now I've had such a request from the Knopf firm, & have sent in seven of my best tales—but I know very well that they will come straggling homeward in the end.

Yrs most cordially & sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

638. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
August 8, 1933.

My dear Barlow:—

.....

But as I said before, I never hold youth and its transient defects against anybody. It has merits which amply make up for the undeveloped spots, and all of us old geezers would be glad to recapture it if some time-machine were to make such a thing possible. As people grow older, it is curious to see how widely they vary in the amount of their youthful outlook and psychology which they retain. Some appear to become transformed into altogether different persons, totally forgetting whole chapters of their earlier lives; while others change relatively little in basic feelings. I am one of the unchanging sort—there isn't a taste or interest in my whole psychology which didn't exist in some form or other before I was five years old. My style in both prose and verse was *basically* the same at 11 or 12 as it is now (although of course my handling of ideas and images was then ludicrously immature)—and my continuous memory of those far-off days is so keen that I can still enter into all their thoughts and feelings. It takes no effort at all—especially when I am out in certain woods and fields which have not changed a bit since my boyhood—for me to imagine that all the years since 1902 or 1903 are a dream . . . . . that I am still 12 years old, and that when I go home it will be through the quieter, more village-like streets of those days—with horses and wagons, and little varicoloured street cars with open platforms, and with my old home at 454 Angell St. still waiting at the end of the vista—with my mother, grandfather, black cat, and other departed companions alive and unchanged.

*Time* is really one of the most baffling and fascinating things in hu-



man experience. What is it that has created a 1933 HPL differing from the 1903 HPL—and can the 1903 HPL be *really* annihilated when all his moods and memories can be recalled by the 1933 edition? I give it up—but there is a whole wealth of fantastic story material in the reflections arising from these things. I think that of all the concepts inciting me to expression, the mystery of *time* is perhaps the most potent and persistent. My *Silver Key* is an example of how I react to it.

Best wishes—

Yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servt. HPL

639. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
August 14, 1933

Dear Jehvish-Êi:—

..... What you say of the background of *To Love a Faun* is highly interesting—this chap Bonner must be rather a pathetic figure. Certainly, his case forms a very fruitful basis for serious fictional treatment. I guess it is true that homosexuality is a rare theme for novels—partly because public attention was seldom called to it (except briefly during the Wilde period) until a decade ago, & partly because any literary use of it always incurs the peril of legal censorship. As a matter of fact—although of course I always knew that paederasty was a disgusting custom of many ancient nations—I never heard of homosexuality as an actual instinct till I was over thirty . . . which beats your record! It is possible, I think that this perversion occurs more frequently in some periods than in others—owing to obscure biological & psychological causes. Decadent ages—when psychology is unsettled—seem to favour it. Of course—in ancient times the extent of the practice of paederasty (as a custom which most simply accepted blindly, without any special inclination) cannot be taken as any measure of the extent of actual psychological perversion. Another thing—many nowadays overlook the fact that there are always distinctly *effeminate* types which are most distinctly *not homosexual*. I don't know how psychology explains them, but we all know the sort of damned sissy who plays with girls & who—when he grows up—is a chronic “cake-eater”, hanging

around girls, doting on dances, acquiring certain feminine mannerisms, intonations, & tastes, & yet *never* having even the slightest perversion of erotic inclinations. All his romantic & sexual feelings are in the right direction—toward women—and yet he tends to reflect the personality of the women he admires. He makes a good husband & father, & seems to *dislike* other men in the long run—never being much for stag gatherings, & never seeming to understand thoroughly the *general* masculine reaction to life. It is curious how this type of sissy seems to be forgotten amidst the modern wave of interest in homosexuality. I have come across many in my time—and it would certainly be absurd (in view of their constant interest in girls & lack of any even friendly feelings toward men & boys) to assume that the basis of their peculiarities is deeply sexual. These people hardly represent a real *problem*, although they are distinctly ridiculous & repellent. In my youth they were caricatured frequently on the stage; their representation being (because of the general ignorance of homosexuality's existence) wholly free from smut, & altogether in the “good clean fun” class. Poor devils—the modern wave of sophistication must be damned hard on them, since nowadays everyone must suspect them of perversion! Your Bonner may possibly belong merely to this harmless type. There are, too, undoubtedly many masculine women whose masculine manners & outlook are equally free from actual homosexuality.

..... As for *Handsome Adolf*—in saying he is sincere, & that there is a certain basis behind some phases of the attitude he represents, I do not mean to imply that his actual programme is not extreme, grotesque, & occasionally barbarous. His attempt to banish arbitrarily all literature he does not like is of course essentially uncivilised—while his ethnological theories (as distinguished from any defence of a purely Aryan culture) are contrary to the maturest beliefs of science. I doubt if he is actually a Jew, though—for that sort of story follows a familiar folklore pattern. It would be *too aptly dramatic* if he actually did represent the group he opposes.

Yr most obt hbl Servt  
E'ch-Pi-El

640. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
August 16, 1933

Dear Miss Sully:—

I am surprised to hear that you found Quebec's antiquity submerged by various modern aspects; for notwithstanding the occasional jarring structures (including L'Édifice Price, that skyscraper from which I try to shield myself with a church steeple) & the toll of successive conflagrations, there is enough of the past left to give me a thrill of the most potent & permanent kind. In the first place, the topography is so striking—& so interwoven with history—that the imagination is excited by that alone. Secondly, many of the features which are admittedly neither Gallic nor very ancient are amply exotic & quaint enough to command interest in their own right—& are often reproductions or continuations of vastly older things. Of this type are the *citadel*, the St. Louis & Kent gates, & some of the picturesque silver-belfried churches. Third—despite fire & "improvement" there actually *is* a vast amount of antiquity left. Seminary—convent—Hotel Dieu—*city walls* (only specimens in North-America)—grand battery & ramparts—arsenal at Palace Gate (that sheer ascent of wall & cliff as seen from St. Vallier St. on the way to the station is one of the most stupefying *mediaeval* effects I have ever glimpsed. It might well be taken bodily from Klarkash-Ton's *Averoigne*!)—Notre-Dame des Victoires—the Gen. Wolfe sign—any number of private houses in St. Louis St., or back from Dufferin Terrace around the Governor's gardens, or in the little network I spoke of on St. Famille Hill—& most of all, the layout of the narrow streets themselves, with their utterly unexpected vistas of ancient roofs, silver spires, lordly river, or green countryside & far-off purple Laurentians. Even the modern or relatively modern houses have quaintness & charm, since they followed traditional French designs till far into the 19th century. And incidentally—some of the worst fires were in the St. Roch or St. Sanveur quarters of the lower town, so that the record of Quebec conflagrations (a formidable one, owing to the intense house-heating

required by the subarctic climate) does not imply the devastation of the choicest main district on each occasion. At any rate, I did not find Quebec disappointing; & can agree with Sir Michael Sadler's dictum that it is the most beautiful town in the Western Hemisphere. It is, moreover, the one place (aside from his precious Manhattan) which can get Little Belknap enthusiastic in spite of his ostentatious anti-archaism. Glad to hear that the Carrel guide helped you see the sights—you were wise to obtain one for yourself.

I had an idea that Ste. Anne de Beaupre would be disappointing, for the guidebooks admitted that most of the antiquity was gone. That is why I omitted the trip thither (I went on the electric train as far as Montmorency Falls, but returned thence in order to get extra time in Quebec itself) in 1930. The commercialism there is remarked by many. However, the weird chanting in the hillside church must have formed a compensation. As for the omnipresent outstretched palm—it astonishes me to learn that it has reached the dank shadows of *Sous le Cap*! In 1930, & also last year, I ploughed through the miasmatic air of that sinister burrow without any bids from juvenile models—though perhaps my 1925 grey suit & cameraless hands caused me to be mistaken for a denizen rather than a wealthy American tourist! Where I did encounter the baksheesh-whining horde was in the St. Roch slums—when I took the ride on the observation trolley-car. There, however, the young mendicants were more modest; for it was pen-nees, not neeckels, which formed the object of their clamour. The conductor-lecturer informed his audience that such youthful alms-seekers often suffer injury from vehicles as they dodge about the street to retrieve the coppers flung from the cars—hence at his advice the passengers refrained from heeding the shrill pleas. Glad you secured at least one suitable & unmercenary pose!

It is evident that you have really had a far more representative view of the general Quebec region than I was able to secure on my two regrettably brief trips. The expedition to the Laurentians must have been prodigiously fascinating—as also the glimpses of British life & the royal guidance in the caleche. Glad the driver was so considerate of his Rosie! The photographs of the slide of 1886 (along Champlain St., which I mentioned as an especially spectral & sinister place with its absolutely barren interval & its broken line of half-ruined houses beyond) must have been harrowing indeed. Did you see the Isle of Orleans? I hope so, for if I am any judge, you could not find that bit of primitive coun-



tryside—with its old houses & remarkable churches—disappointing. And did you see the Huron village of Lorette? I didn't. I trust you also had a glimpse of Montreal—modern, but not without its quaint & attractive aspects. I wish I could get up to Quebec before the cold sets in, but fear it will be impossible.

Yr obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

641. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Prospect Terrace  
Aug. 28, 1933

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

My aunt's cast was removed Aug. 3d, but the doctor forbids her to be very active as yet even on crutches. Accordingly the nurse is still here, & I am still very much tied down. Have a New Hampshire invitation which I may be obliged to decline. . . .

. . . . . A new magazine called *The Fantasy Fan* has just started, & Smith & I are giving it all our old rejected mss.—which it will print without pay, though giving us a generous supply of free copies. . . . .

Don't get the idea that poetry must deal with the age & its troubles. That is really far from the essence of the art. What the world situation needs is more intelligent economics & philosophy, & poetry can hardly be expected to provide that! It is a mistake—& a sentimentality—to assume that poetry has a "mission". Art has no ulterior end—it is an end in itself, though by chance it often serves additional ends. Poetry is simply a reflection of beauty—not a panacea for social disorders. If it sometimes leads toward a state of mind in which social adjustment becomes more feasible, that is purely an incidental—or accidental—circumstance.

Clark Ashton Smith is writing less poetry now that he specialises in fiction, though occasionally he turns out some impressive verse. He greatly appreciates your ordering both *Ebony & Crystal* & the new brochure. Incidentally—he lately killed a rattlesnake which had almost

crept upon him as he sat writing in the yard of his home. It has been 108° & 109° in Auburn recently—just my kind of weather!

. . . . . It is possible that I can get to *Quebec* Sept. 1-6—the matter depending on whether friends can arrange to stay with my aunt afternoons during the period in question. I certainly hope I can manage it—for I long to see the citadel & ancient city walls of the mighty stronghold of the north, & to tread again a soil still loyal to our rightful King. . . . .

About *Green Tea*—it was written in the 1850's. The Victorians went in strongly for weird fiction—Bulwer-Lytton, Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Harrison Ainsworth, Mrs. Oliphant, George W. M. Reynolds, H. Rider Haggard, R. L. Stevenson & countless others turned out reams of it. Its period of decline was around 1918 or so—but even then there were many representatives. It reflects a permanent mood of human nature, & will probably never become wholly extinct.

Best wishes—

Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

Experimenting with new tales—don't know how they'll turn out.

642. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

Aug. 30, 1933

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

As for the rejection of mss.—experience will demonstrate to you the melancholy truth that certain ones will always come back repeatedly, no matter how proficient a workman you become. . . . . All of the exquisite phantasies in that brochure of Smith's have been rejected 4 or 5 times—by *W. T.*, *Strange Tales*, *Astounding Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, *Wonder Stories*, *Magic Carpet*, &c. What is wanted professionally is not sheer excellence, but conformity to a certain artificial convention. When a writer lays aside the artistic motive & studies the market cold-bloodedly (as E. Hoffmann Price has begun to do)—analysing editorial whims & deliberately catering to them—his percentage of acceptances rises perceptibly. Not everyone, though, can do this. I can't—& as a result a vast amount of my stuff remains universally rejected. . . . .

..... One must become virtually discouragement-proof if one is to persist in professional auctorial endeavour. It is impossible ever to avoid a certain proportion of rebuffs unless one belongs to that rare & happy minority who catch the popular fancy—partly by accident & partly through certain inborn or acquired gifts.

Yrs most cordially & sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

643. TO AUGUST DERLETH

(circa September, 1933)

Dear A. W.:—

... The trip surely was delightful. As to the relative interest of Quebec and the pioneer village—I fancy the former wins when all the points are counted. In the first place the landscape setting is utterly incomparable. No other city in America has such a breath-takingly magnificent topographical background—sheer cliff, vast river with corresponding cliffs on the other side, outspread leagues of rolling countryside, and impressive ridge of purple mountains toward the north. Secondly—Quebec has certain architectural features of enormous picturesqueness, beauty, and imaginative appeal not to be found elsewhere on the continent—city wall, commanding citadel with cyclopean masonry, high ramparts bristling with ancient cannon—everything to remind one of the glamorous antiquities of the Old World. Third—a tremendous beauty of general layout—winding streets full of mystery, graceful red roofs and chimney-pots, massive stone edifices of the 17th century, delicate belfries and spires covered with tin and gleaming like silver in the sun, finely-arched city gates, tastefully-landscaped parks, well-chosen monuments and (except for one unfortunate skyscraper which has, however, a traditional Norman roof) a gratifying absence of ugly buildings and industrial blights. Sir Michael Sadler of Oxford calls Quebec one of the 20 most beautiful cities in the world, and the *most* beautiful in the Western Hemisphere—using a criterion so rigid that it excludes London. Added to this intrinsic beauty is the potent imaginative fascination which resides in vast numbers of ancient houses in their original state and relationship—preserving for our sight whole living sections of the past. The pioneer village is lovely and picturesque,

but no small or simple place could have as *many* points of contact with the imagination as a sizeable city with *extensive* and *developed* reliques of the past; each one *original* and not reproduced, all present in such a *variety* that a myriad different facets of historic memory are touched upon, and embodying an element of *continuous and unchanged survival* affording an incomparable sense of material linkage with the stream of the ages. ...

Yr. obt. Grandsire sends blessings—  
HP

644. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Abandoned Church of St. Toad  
in the Crumbling Slums of ancient Yothby.  
Hour of the Scratching within  
the Sealed Spire.  
Sept. 11, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

In Quebec one of the most striking things is the *sky*—the odd cloud formations peculiar to northern latitudes and unknown in R. I. Mist and vapour assume fantastic and portentous forms, and at sunset on Labour Day I saw one of the most impressive phenomena imaginable from my vantage-point on the Citadel overlooking the river and the Lévis cliffs beyond. The evening was predominantly clear; but some strange refractive quality gave the dying solar rays an abnormal redness, while from the zenith to the southeastern horizon stretched an almost black funnel of churning nimbus clouds—the small end meeting the earth at some inland point beyond Lévis. From a place midway in this cloud-funnel, zigzag streaks of lightning would occasionally dart toward the ground, with faint rumbles of thunder following tardily after. Finally—while the blood-red sun still bathed the river and cliffs and housetops—a pallid fragment of rainbow sprang into sight above the distant Isle d'Orleans; its upper end lost in the great funnel of cloud. I have never seen such a phenomenon before, and doubt if it could occur as far south as Providence. Another striking thing is the almost perpetual mist which hovers about the mountains and valleys near Lake Memphremagog, at the Vermont-Quebec line. With such bizarre skies,



I do not wonder that the northern races excel those of the south in fantastic imagination.

Yrs. for the chanting of the Dark Rhythm—  
E'ch-Pi-El

645. TO ROBERT BLOCH

Sealed Tower of N'kung  
Hour of the Signal from the Dark Nebula  
(circa September, 1933)

Dear Bho-Blôk:—

... You astonish me when you say you dream but twice a year. I can never drop off for a second—not even in my easy-chair or over my desk—without having dreams of the most vivid sort; not always bizarre or fantastic, but always clear-cut and lifelike. I seldom dream of *recent* everyday things, but tend to hark back 30 years or more to my boyhood—which was by all odds the happiest period of my existence. In nine dreams out of ten I am a kid in short trousers at my birthplace, with my mother, grandfather, and other departed kinsfolk and friends alive. Usually the general setting is quite consistent—horses and carriages, little street cars with open platforms, &c—though occasionally modern elements are illogically interpolated into the 1903 atmosphere. At other times modern events are adapted or reconciled to the 1903 period in a way that would be extremely clever if it were conscious work. But besides these comparatively mundane dreams I occasionally have boldly fantastic ones which make good weird-fictional material. Only last night I was with a party of silent, apprehensive men armed with some peculiar occult device like an *ankh* or *crux ansata*—climbing up ladders and picking a precarious way over the huddled sagging roofs of a rotting and incredibly ancient town, in search of a vague being of infinite and incredible evil which had been afflicting the inhabitants. Once—in the light of a leprous, waning moon—we saw *It* . . . a black, large-eared, crouching thing about the size of a large dog, and roughly resembling one of the Notre Dame gargoyles. In the end *It* escaped us in a peculiar fashion. Our leader, it seemed, was a very distinguished looking young man on horseback, who did not climb up

to the roofs as we did at his orders. All at once, as we chased the thing from roof to roof and made *It* cringe at the sight of our shining metal ankh, *It* spread rudimentary bat-wings and launched *Itself* at our leader as he be-strode his pawing horse far below us. Looking down, we saw the Blasphemy merge *Itself* plastically and hideously with the handsome form of the mounted captain, till in an instant there was but one being where two had been . . . a shocking hybrid thing clad in the silken robe of our captain, yet having in lieu of a face only the black, large-eared snout of the evil entity. *It* looked up and leered—squealing things we could not understand—and then galloped off on the horse that had been our leader's. We were in confusion—clambering bewilderedly down to the snowless but slightly frozen ground—when I awaked. That's all there was to it—not enough for a story, but typical of the sort of dream I have every week or so—or perhaps twice a week.

.....

... Yrs. in the Black Rite of Yaddith  
Ech-Pi-El

646. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Prospect Terrace, on the Ancient Hill.  
Sunset.  
Septr. 19, 1933

Dear Malik:—

But Belknap slipped up on one thing—for he was absolutely and unqualifiedly wrong in believing that I have published non-weird fiction under a pseudonym. I not only have never done so, but have certainly never said anything from which such a mistaken inference could legitimately be made. That's the kid's one trouble—his imagination flies off on a tangent, and now and then goes beyond the plain facts. For example—when Putnam's asked to see some of my tales 3 years ago (they later turned 'em down), Belknap began telling the gang that they were going to publish a book of mine. And he really believed it, the young imp! In the present case I think Sonny got two separate things mixed up and exaggerated both. One element was probably that recent Cape Cod conversation I told you about—when we were discussing the *possibility* of my attempting general hack fiction with the

aid of some device like a plot chart. But what I said I *might attempt* is a long way from anything I have ever *done*! The other element is the fact that I have ghost-written all sorts of junk for various clients. But here again—that's a long way from genuine and original pseudonymous writing. What is more—most of the tales I have ghost-written have been *weird*. And further—a lot of this ghost-written stuff has never sold, anyhow! So there is the end of a beautiful myth. May it rest peacefully in the bosom of Eblis beneath the crumbling pillars of Istakhar!

Blessings of the Djinn—Abdul

647. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Antient Hill—  
Sept. 20, 1933

Heav'n-High Hierarch of Hereditary Harvesting:—

Alas that I cou'd not have been in on that historick triangular meeting whose tantalising bulletin greeted me upon my return from antient Quebec! Glowing reports reach me, not only from Little Sonny but from the Peacock Sultan as well—the latter dignitary, after an eventful run including tree-climbing, cow-butting, burned-out engines, and the like, and a pause at St. Augustine, being once more establish'd at 1416 Josephine Street in New-France's southernmost outpost. There's a boy for you! No cut-and-dried schedules for him! His last plan—as outlined to me late in August—was to hibernate in *Miami* . . . . yet my new communication from him bears the good old Nouvelle-Orleans postmark. Charm of the unexpected . . . . who the hell wants to know what lies around the corner? We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way! Consider and draw a lesson therefrom! I'm glad to see that you and Sultan Malik took to each other—he devotes nearly half a page to your enthusiastick praise, having obviously been heavily impress'd. He'll be around again, never fear! Even now he is congratulating himself that enough of the Juggernaut is left to take him to Chicago, California, and Cross Plains, Texas. Gone today, here tomorrow! That's the way to squeeze the savour out of life's brief and meaningless flash—although I, personally, wouldn't enjoy itinerancy unless I had a fully settled home with books and familiar objects to

return to. He is the complete bird of passage—but I am merely the restless navigator who explores far shores only to return to Devon's ancient lanes and abbey towers in the end. I got a card from St. Augustine—where I wish to gawd I could be until the middle of next June!

...

Yr. obt. hble. Servt.,  
Father Theobaldus

648. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Sept. 25, 1933

Dear Jehvish-Êi:—

My Quebec trip was certainly a thorough success—and all the more so because of its unexpectedness. On the outbound voyage I paused in the Boston zone long enough to look up the ancient Deane Winthrop house in a suburb. This edifice was built in 1637, & is one of the oldest structures in America. It is a simple farmhouse, but very solidly built. In the base of the colossal brick chimney is a secret room—of a sort very common in 17th century houses. An historical society maintains the place. I also called on W. Paul Cook—the Recluse man—while in Boston. The long train ride to Quebec was spent in reading & drowsing—and was unusually pleasant because there were no alcohol-seeking roysterers aboard as in '30 & '32. The return of King Gambrinus to the States has its compensations! Most of the passengers were honest, simple French peasants bent on visiting ancestral soil or on grovelling at the miracle-working shrine of La Bonne Ste. Anne de Beaupre. At last—after a post-auroral dash through the increasingly picturesque provincial landscape—came the mighty fortress of the North itself . . . the rock-bound stronghold which defied the fleet of ships & formed the Carthage of Cotton Mather's minatory thunderings! It gave me a tremendous hereditary kick to see our Old Flag—the time-hallowed Union Jack which greed & selfishness pulled down from the flagstaffs of the more southerly colonies—fluttering proudly from the lofty citadel & the towers of the House of Parliament. God Save the King!



I had four days—all delectably hot & sunny—in Quebec, & certainly made the most of them. What a town! Old grey walls, majestic citadel, dizzying cliffs, silver spires, ancient red roofs, mazes of winding ways, constant music of mellow chimes & clapping hooves over centuried cobblestones, throngs of cassocked, shovel-hatted priests, robed nuns, & tonsured barefoot friars, vistas of huddled chimney-pots, broad blue river far below, vivid, verdant countryside, & the dim, distant line of the purple Laurentians. . . . I also took some suburban trips—a walk to Sillery, up the river (whose headland church is such an universal landmark), & a trolley ride to the upper level of the Montmorency Falls, where stands Kent House (enlarged & badly defaced as an hotel), the Georgia mansion inhabited in the 1790's by the Duke of Kent, Queen Victoria's father. I loafed, read & wrote in all the parks & on the citadel embankment, & looked up the exact spot of Wolfe's ascent of the cliff—not an easy quest, since it is unmarked, & since the local Gauls are far from eager to point out the route of their great conqueror. . . .

My ride back to the States was extremely pleasant—an apocalyptic sunset over a grotesquely steeped hilltop village, & a great round moon flooding strange plains with an eery radiance. Dawn came in a New Hampshire lake-&-mountain region of uncommon beauty, & I glimpsed Daniel Webster's early home from the train south of Franklin. Boston at 9 a. m.—& then good old Salem & Marblehead (Arkham & Kingsport).

In Salem I came upon some interesting new things, & got inside the fine old Richard Derby house (1762) for the first time. This structure—splendidly panelled—was rather old-fashioned even in its day. The Derbys were virtually the first of the great merchant princes of Salem—ship-captains & owners who established the thriving East-India trade. One high spot was the perfect reproduction of a gabled house of 1650 lately built on the grounds of the Pequot Mills. Every detail of 17th century work is duplicated with scholarly fidelity, & I could hardly believe it was a modern fac-simile. But the climax was the splendid reproduction of the pioneer Salem settlement of 1626 et seq., carefully constructed & laid out in Forest River Park. It consists of a generous plot of ground at the harbour's edge, painstakingly landscaped & covered with absolutely perfect duplicates of the very earliest huts & houses—dwellings of a sort now utterly vanished. All the early industries are

also reproduced—there being such things as an ancient saw-pit, blacksmith shop, salt-works, brick-plant, fish-drying outfit, & so on. Nothing else that I have ever seen gives one so good a picture of the rough pioneer life led during the first half-decade of New England colonisation. Marblehead possessed its accustomed charm—though my inspection was broken by several showers. I finally got utterly drenched in Boston as I darted from the North Station to pay a farewell call on Cook. All told, it was a magnificent outing in spite of its brevity—and is probably the only first-rate voyage I'll get this year.

. . . . . The problem of race & culture is by no means as simple as is assumed either by the Nazis or by the rabble-catering equalitarian columnists of the Jew-York papers. Of course Hitler is an unscientific extremist in fancying that any racial strain can be reduced to theoretical purity, that the Nordic stock is intellectually & aesthetically superior to all others, & that even a trace of non-Nordic blood—or non-Aryan blood—is enough to alter the psychology & citizenly potentialities of an individual. These assumptions, most certainly, are crude & ignorant—but the anti-Hitlerites are too cocksure when they maintain that the fallacy of these points justifies a precisely opposite extremism. As a matter of fact—all apart from social & political prejudice—there indisputably is such a thing as a Nordic subdivision of the white race, as evolved by a strenuous & migratory life in Northern Asia & Europe. Of course, very little of it remains Simon-pure at this date—after all the mixtures resulting from its contacts with other stocks—but anyone would be a damn fool to deny that certain modern racial or cultural units remain *predominantly & determinantly* Nordic in blood, so that their instincts & reactions generally follow the Nordic pattern, & differ basically from those of the groups which are predominantly non-Nordic. Anybody can see for himself the difference between a tall, straight-nosed, fine-haired dolichocephalic Teuton or Celt (be he blond or dark) on the one hand, & a squat, swarthy Latin, aquiline Semite, or brachycephalic Slav on the other hand. And even if a Teutonic or Celtic group happens to pick up & assimilate substantial numbers of Latins, Semites, or Slavs, it will continue to think & feel & act in a characteristic Nordic fashion as long as the old blood remains predominant, & the culture-stream remains unbroken. It is of course true that the cultural heritage is more influential than the biological, but only a freakish extremist would reduce the biological to negligibility. Separate lines of evolution

have certainly developed typically differing responses to given environmental stimuli. As for the question of superiority & inferiority—when we observe the whole animal kingdom & note the vast differences in capacity betwixt different species & sub-species within various genera, we see how utterly asinine & hysterically sentimental is the blanket assumption of idealists & other fools that all the sub-species of *Homo sapiens* must *necessarily* be equal. The truth is, that we cannot lay down any general rule in this matter at the outset. We must simply study each variety with the perfect detachment of the zoölogist & abide by the results of honest investigation whether we relish them or not. And what does such a study tell us? Largely this—that the australoid & negro races are basically & structurally primitive—possessing definite morphological & psychological variations in the direction of lower stages of organisation—whilst all others average about the same so far as the best classes of each are concerned. The same, that is, in *total capacity*—though each has its own special aptitudes & deficiencies. The races are *equal*, but *infinitely different*—so that the cultural pattern of one is essentially unadaptable to any other. The ancient civilisation of China is not inferior to ours—yet it could not possibly suit us, any more than ours could suit a race of essentially Mongol descent. And that is where the need of realistic intelligence as opposed to idealistic & sentimental flapdoodle in matters of racial policy comes in. The fact is, that a need for a certain rational amount of racial discrimination exists *apart from all questions of superiority or inferiority*. The effective development of a civilisation depends largely upon its *stability & continuity*; & these factors cannot be ensured unless (a) the culture-stream remains relatively undiluted by alien traditions or irrelevant & traditionless innovations, & (b) the race-stock remains approximately the same as that which evolved the culture & institutions now existing. The first point is of course, very obvious. The second becomes so after a moment's thought. To take a concrete instance—we live in a social group & nation whose ingrained, hereditary folkways & types of thought & feeling are emphatically an outgrowth of a Teutonic-Celtic race-stock. That is, our institutions were evolved to fit the particular biological & psychological needs of persons who are predominantly Nordic Aryans, so that they cannot fit other races except in such respects as those others may happen to resemble ours. In many cases other race-stocks have decidedly different needs & feelings—hence if they try to settle *en masse* in our

country they create a situation of mutual discomfort. They do not feel at home among us—& when they try to bend our institutions to fit themselves they make us uncomfortable, destroy our cultural equilibrium, & permanently weaken, dilute, & set back our whole civilisation. This should not be! Therefore *just this much* of Hitler's basic racial theory is *perfectly & irrefutably* sound: namely, that no settled & homogeneous nation ought (a) to admit enough of a decidedly alien race-stock to bring about an actual alteration in the dominant ethnic composition, or (b) tolerate the dilution of the culture-stream with emotional & intellectual elements alien to the original cultural impulse. Both of these perils lead to the most undesirable results—i. e., the metamorphosis of the population away from the original institutions, & the twisting of the institutions away from the original people . . . . . all these things being aspects of one underlying & disastrous condition—the destruction of cultural stability, & the creation of a hopeless disparity between a social group & the institutions under which it lives. *Now this has nothing to do with intrinsic superiority & inferiority*. That is what the howling sentimentalists & faddists can't get through their thick beans. It doesn't matter whether a race is our equal—or even our superior (as, in all probability, the ancient Greek race—a Nordic-Mediterranean blend—was); if it is in any way radically *different* from ours, then its blood ought not to pour by the wholesale into our nation, & its institutions (made to fit *it*, not *us*) ought not to be allowed to twist & dilute our own. Even *superior* importations can harm our culture if they break up the equilibrium existing between the people & the institutions under which the people live. Remember that a people cannot change its institutions lightly. These things, to be valid & satisfying, must be a deep-seated hereditary growth—& must above all be suited to the peculiar aptitudes of the race in question. Thus I sympathise warmly & completely with the general principle that northern nations like Germany & the United States ought to be kept *predominantly* Nordic in blood & *wholly* Nordic in institutions. This is not because Nordic blood & culture are necessarily superior to any other, but simply because the given nations happen to be essentially Nordic at the outset. I believe just as strongly that Japan ought to be kept predominantly Japanese; & would resent a wholesale influx of Aryans into Japan as keenly as I would resent a wholesale influx of Japanese into an Aryan nation. Indeed, I agree with those Japanese scholars who lament the



existing dilution of Japan's art & folkways with European elements. As for this flabby talk of an "Americanism" which opposes all racial discrimination—that is simply goddamned bull-shit! The ideal is so flagrantly unsound in its very essence, that it would be a disgrace to any national tradition professing it. It is an ignorant, sentimental, impracticable, & potentially dangerous delusion—and any sophisticated person can realise that it belongs only to the insincere pseudo-Americanism of the spread-eagle illiterate or the charlatanic word politician. It is what superficial Americans proclaim with their lips, while actually lynching niggers & selling select real-estate on a restrictive basis to keep Jews & Dagoes out. In other words, it is *not* a part of any "Americanism" which has any *real* existence. It is merely part of the cheap American bluff—and indeed, is not even nominally professed in that southern half of the country which was once the most important half & which will probably become so again. Ever since 1924 American immigration legislation has, under the very thinnest of veils, discouraged the immigration of racial elements radically alien to the original American people; & I do not believe this sound policy will ever be rescinded. We had this much of "Hitlerism" before we had ever heard of Handsome Adolf!

But now to give the other side its due. Certainly, the Nazis are guilty of fantastic & sentimental error in assuming that *small doses* of alien blood have the same undermining effect as vast influxes, as well as in claiming that *individuals* are unfitted for participation in a given culture because of the possession of an alien blood-strain. Actually, the inherent traits of a race are those of *all* its members, taken on the *average*. This average is of course struck by the inclusion of all sorts of individual variants; & it is an obvious fact—in view of human uniqueness & variability—that many *individuals* in any culture depart vastly from the group average in the direction of the averages of other groups. Thus there are hundreds of individual aliens perfectly fitted to mingle with our civilisation *on that civilisation's own terms*—a circumstance the more marked because, after all, a good part of the individual's personality is a matter of culture-heritage rather than biology. The absorption into our fabric of *a few* aliens can hardly produce any genuine harm. These people are not necessarily any more misfits than *some* of our own people. Their absorption merely increases *slightly* the inevitable misfit proportion; & in view of the overwhelming pressure of our culture-

tradition, their descendants (with alienage constantly thinning through blood-admixture, just as the alienage of our own dark Iberic ancestors of southwestern Britain was thinned through submersion in the Nordic blood of Celtic Britons, Saxon conquerors, & Danish & Norman invaders) stand every chance of becoming *completely* assimilated to our national type. Thus the old Spanish families of St. Augustine are completely assimilated to the American type—the Seguís, Sanchezes, Garcias, &c. being absolutely indistinguishable in speech, manners, thought, & feelings from the Smiths & Joneses among whom they dwell. So also with the colonially settled Jews of various cities. Nine-tenths of their blood is indistinguishably lost in the native-American stock—, as, for instance, that of the Franks family of Philadelphia, one of whose daughters married the celebrated Andrew Hamilton (designer of *Independence Hall* & advocate in the famous Zenger trial in N. Y. in 1735) & became the mother of a thoroughly Anglo-American line. It would, obviously, be foolish to insist on classifying the St. Augustine Sanchezes with the jabbering Cubans of Aviles St. rather than with the general American population of the town, or to segregate the Hamilton descendants of David Franks with the loathsome scum of Philadelphia's ghetto instead of acknowledging them as genuine old Philadelphians. Hitler, in effect, *would* practice such an absurdity—hence to that extent he *is* freakishly unsound. But at the same time we must not forget that the normal & successful assimilation (*full* assimilation to *our* culture, without any compromise or concession on our part) of *a few* Spaniards & Jews has nothing to do with the totally different problems presented when *hundreds of thousands* of Cubans, Mexicans, & South Americans, or stinking mongrels from Central & Eastern European ghettos begin pouring in & actually changing the predominant blood-composition of whole sections of our territory (today Key West is no longer in any sense a fully American city, but a place where Spanish influences dilute & alter everything; whilst the utter & repugnant Semitism of New York is a matter of common knowledge); or when certain powerful cliques of superior aliens enter our territory without relinquishing their own traditions, & commence using their influence to distort our fabric in the direction of their own. (As the Jews do in New York, & the Italians to some extent in Providence). Thus both pure Hitlerism & rabid anti-Hitlerism are almost equally absurd. On the one hand it is sheerly asinine to claim (as Hitler does) that the thoroughly German &

Roman Catholic Mme. Schumann-Heink is "not a German" because research reveals a Jew in her ancestry; but on the other hand it is equally puerile to pretend that the utter submersion of New York by Jews, the wholesale flooding of New England by Latins, & the subtle capture of the avenues of American expression by alien influences are not unqualified calamities tending to make us feel uncomfortable in our own country & ultimately to weaken our civilisation. I can certainly appreciate the need for racial & cultural conservation which lies behind Hitler's crude ethnic policy—and that need is not a bit less real or pressing because of the unscientific extravagance of Hitler's specific concepts & methods. What is truly to be desired is some moderate middle course which shall exclude all *large influxes* of alien blood, & curtail the political, social, literary, & financial influence of persons directly belonging to alien culture-groups; yet without depending on unsound biological theories or applying ridiculous & unnecessary ancestral tests to persons obviously belonging to the dominant culture. Of course, the question of the *inferior races* is a wholly different one—and one which does not exist in Germany. That is the peculiar burden of the American, the Cuban, the South-African, the Australian, the Anglo-Indian or Brahmin, & the West-Indian. I still seem to feel that the absolute colour-line represents the course of greatest wisdom wherever white people are in contact with vast hordes of australoids & negroes. Indeed—I would expand that view to include not only white people but other superior races like the Mongols. If Japan ever conquered Australia or the United States it would be necessary for the Japanese to draw a rigid colour-line against the black fellows & niggers. Wherever superior races have absorbed large doses of inferior blood, the results have been tragic. Egypt is one case—and India presents a still more loathsome extreme. The Aryans in India were too late in establishing their colour-based caste system, so that today the culture of the Hindoo is probably the most thoroughly repulsive on our planet. The more one learns about India the more one wants to vomit. Aside from a few profound minds, the Indian people represent such an abyss of degeneracy that extirpation & fumigation would seem to be about the only way to make Hindoostan fit for decent people to inhabit. As a final word on the Nordic—no responsible person wishes to represent him as intrinsically superior to any other white race. In pure intellection he is surpassed by the Semite, & in aesthetic delicacy & sensitiveness he ranks below the Mediterranean. His great con-

tribution to mental life is his sense of symbolism—his mysticism & his poetry. Here he has no competitor. All the supreme poetry of the world since Graeco-Roman times is Nordic, & we know that only the dream-inspired minds of Celts & Teutons could ever have evolved the imaginative triumphs of Gothic architecture from the few hints of pointed-arch treatment picked up in the East during the Crusades. So much for that. It is not on the purely intellectual-aesthetic side that the Nordic bases his claim to prime merit. What the Nordic primarily is, is a *master in the art of orderly living & group preservation*. He is the only social & political adult since the fall of the Roman Empire. His is that peculiar strength which sweeps all before it, & makes safe from aggression or decay the institutions he evolves. *Stamina* is the great contribution of the Nordic to the modern world. He has a natural code of ideals which places *self-respecting freedom & courage* toweringly above all other human qualities (that is why he can never reach common ground with the crafty, sensuous Latin, or cringing, ethics-worshipping Jew)—& this causes him to erect strong, permanent, & orderly fabrics which nothing can sweep away & which therefore form the places where civilisation can best achieve the unbroken continuity it needs for mellowing. Not that other races of the past & present lack kindred qualities—but simply that the Nordic is the most typical surviving example. He fosters those qualities most necessary to survival, & avoids the pitiful & contemptible messes of crawling parasitism & servile degeneracy into which other superior races tend to fall. (Cf. Greeks under the Roman Empire—Jews of all ages—pseudo-Romans under the Gothic kings, &c.) It is genuinely difficult today to see how our western civilisation can survive unless the Nordic race (i.e., the mixtures in which Nordic blood & culture remain reasonably predominant)—or ideals closely akin to those of the Nordic race—remain emphatically in the saddle; hence no excuse is needed for any attempt to preserve or strengthen the Nordicism of such groups as already possess it. But of course, the *primary* reason for such attempts is simply a sensible wish to keep *every* settled culture (Nordic or not) *true to itself* for the sake of the human values involved. No one wishes to force Nordicism on the non-Nordic—indeed, a real friend of civilisation wishes merely to make the Germans *more German*, the French *more French*, the Spaniards *more Spanish*, & so on. However—as a silent witness of the superior stamina of the Nordic in old days of fluid barbarism, just note how he forced his language &



institutions on others without ever having alien speech or customs forced on him. It is now recognised that all languages & cultures known as "Aryan" are traceable to that tall, blond, dolichocephalic stock which we call "Nordic". It is this blond fighter & ruler who evolved the whole lingual-cultural pattern—and yet look at the infinite diversity of modern races which speak Aryan tongues & follow Aryan folkways! The dark, turbaned Hindoo, the swart, squinting Armenian, the hysterical brachycephalic Slav, the squat, mongrelised neo-Italian, the proud, explosive Iberian, & so on . . . to say nothing of the savage races (Indians, negroes, blackfellows, Polynesians) who have had Aryanism forced on them by European conquerors in modern times. All of these diverse races have had to take their speech & traditions from the blond conqueror—*& yet to this day there is not a single Nordic group which has any language or institutions other than its ancestral Aryan.* Whenever we find a predominantly Nordic group which has suffered linguistic replacement (as the Celts of Gaul who acquired a Latin speech), we discover that the replacing language is *also* Aryan, & that the replacing people were (at least in part, as in the case of the Romans) essentially Nordic. This power, persistence, & stability *mean something*, & it is simply puerile to try to argue them away. To recognise them frankly involves no attempt to rob other races of *their* special merits. The Latin's sense of beauty & the Semite's keen mind all deserve our praise—but we must not ignore the Nordic's stamina, genius for order, & leadership in the art of unbroken survival.

Now as to the non-ethnic features of Hitlerism—the attempt to guide cultural expression in certain channels by exiling authors & suppressing books antagonistic to the desired tradition—here again it is possible to sympathise with basic aims while deploring & ridiculing specific methods. No impartial friend of civilisation can help seeing, as Hitler does, that contemporary culture is in a state of vast rotteness—with weak, unhealthy concepts flourishing like weeds & constantly imperilling our survival against external foes & internal dissension. All the loudest aesthetic & philosophic voices of the hour are howling & whining doctrines & values which can lead to nothing save disintegration, chaos, & the death of all the background-factors which give life the illusion of being worth living. It is a pitiful epidemic, & requires treatment like any other disease—hence one cannot but sympathise with any man courageous enough to attempt its cure. Of course, poor

Adolf has the *wrong* cure in mind. He wants to dethrone reason & substitute blind faith & mystical exaltation instead of backing up reason to the limit & forcing the pseudo-intellectuals to destroy themselves by the sound process of *thinking things through* to the conservative bitter end—hence he directly attacks civilisation by curtailing that freedom of thought & expression on which it primarily rests. All this is unfortunate & ridiculous—and yet no really sober analyst can help liking & respecting the poor devil for what he is blindly & bunglingly trying to do. He is fighting a real evil—and at worst he can't do a sixteenth of the irreparable harm that bolshevism would do. In these days we must be damn charitable toward *any* force which can save a large & important section of the western world from communism. This isn't to excuse his extravagances—but merely to give him the benefit of a proper perspective. As for his international policy, which alarms so many—here again we may clearly understand & sympathise with his motivations, even while deploring the possible consequences. He wants to get rid of the gross inequalities in the Versailles Treaty—and there is absolutely no question but that this treaty is a rotten piece of greed & hypocrisy. That is where the decadence of our whole western civilisation comes in. The great war as a whole was one of those natural & inevitable struggles which human greed now & then makes necessary, & which can never be wholly eliminated even though they may be vastly reduced in number through the exercise of reason. In this general mess Germany was certainly among the *most* eager to start something, yet was assuredly not the *lone & unique* criminal represented for four hysterical years in our grotesque & puerile propaganda. The systematic effort of our Allied nations to reduce a normal & largely 50-50 war to the status of an unprecedented & final "moral crusade" with Germany in the role of leper & antichrist was a piece of morbid, shrill effeminacy which reeks of the stink of modern decadence. It made me sick at the time, & makes me sick today—although gawd knows I was no pro-German. I saw the struggle as a natural clash between powerful equals—Germany glad enough of a chance to swing into first place & secure a grip on the seas & on a colonial empire, & we glad enough of an excuse to give Germany a push backward in order to eliminate a potential peril & almost certain rival. The crisis having come, I had no question of allegiance. As an Anglo-Saxon, every drop of my blood is at the service of any movement designed to defend Anglo-Saxondom &

keep it in first place, so that only my health prevented my serving under the Union Jack or American flag in the field. I would have been as glad as any other man to mow down a bunch of Germans or anyone else arrayed against my civilisation. *But*—I did not find it necessary to call a normal adversary a "Hun" or emissary of the devil, or to assume that his position in general alignment differed essentially from that of my side. Each for his own—fight for your blood & traditions, but realise that the other fellow is honourably doing the same for his! This was always the accepted attitude in less decadent days. In our wars with the French we never assumed that King Louis was a monster or that Quebec people ate little children alive. On the other hand, we had a genuine respect for men like Comte de Frontenac & Marquis de Montcalm—and all through the Hundred Years' War Englishmen travelled freely as civilians in France without either insulting their technical "enemies" or being insulted by them. Contrast this with the insane treatment accorded peaceful German civilians in America & England during the late upheaval! Through the insincere swallowing of impossible humanitarian ideals, decadent nations are forced to camouflage their wars as religious crusades—and at what a loathsome cost to sound policy & common honesty! The worst tragedy of this rotten pseudo-piety came after the war was over. Then was the time to call off the bluff & get down to realities—recognising the similarity of purpose of both victor & vanquished, & having the victor seize only a *reasonable* advantage from his prostrate foe. Any fool ought to know that the utter crippling of a vast nation is a standing menace to the world's equilibrium. Suppose we had not only seized Canada in the treaty of 1763, but had bled France dry with forcibly extorted reparations? George III's ministers, with all their soon-to-be-revealed shortcomings, were better realists than George V's! To my own utter & dumbfounded surprise, the hypocrisies of 1914-18 were carried over into 1919 & dictated the major terms of the Versailles Treaty. Germany was solemnly & officially declared "guilty" of something of which the other powers were "innocent", & loaded down with penalties so exacting & burdensome that no nation could meet them without a disastrous financial collapse & general cracking of morale. The rest is history. Friends of mine & my aunt's who travelled in Germany last year were shocked & depressed by the apathy, misgovernment, threats of communism, & general atmospheric menace in the air—a compound of lethal stagnation dispelled only in those rare

moments when Hitler would sweep up in a motor & deliver a speech whose essential vagueness was lost amidst the revivifying electricity of his voice & gestures . . . . not a cultivated voice or graceful gestures, but things touched with the inexplicable, paradoxical magic peculiar to ignorant & low-born leaders of men. Rather on the Jesus idea, if any one person such as Jesus actually existed—or like Mohammed . . . perhaps more so because of the essential militancy of Hitlerism. Well—the gist of Adolf's harangues was a patriotic revolt against the unjust burdens of Versailles—and when one thinks of those burdens, & of the morbid psychology behind them, one does not have to be a bad Englishman to feel that the fellow was telling the truth & urging the course demanded by the soundest patriotism. If Germany had whipped & crippled us, we would have thrilled to any voice urging us to rise up & repudiate the disproportionate disadvantages heaped upon us. And as good sports, we can't but admire *Der schöne Adolf* when he does the same. However—don't for a moment fancy that I view with complacency all the possibilities of Hitler's foreign policy. His vision is of course romantic & immature, & coloured with a fact-ignoring emotionalism. Bad as the Versailles mess is, it involves a certain complex equilibrium which cannot be lightly disturbed; so that any too-forward & precipitate attempt to upset it might conceivably set off an endless chain of bellicose complications. There surely *is* an actual Hitler peril—yet that cannot blind us to the honest rightness of the man's basic urge. Brown—though hopelessly biassed by his New York & radical contacts—is of course right when he points out the ridiculous features of Nazism. Assuredly, a good laugh based on a sound sense of proportion would leave very little indeed of the solemn, detailed & extravagant programme of the bobmoustachio'd saviour. And yet I repeat that there is a great & pressing need behind every one of the major planks of Hitlerism—racial-cultural continuity, conservative cultural ideals, & an escape from the absurdities of Versailles. The crazy thing is not what Adolf wants, but the way he sees it & starts out to get it. I know he's a clown, but by God, I *like* the boy! He has all the blind, bull-headed qualities of force & persistence which cause tribes & nations to pull out of hopeless impasses & muddle through seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Common sense ought to show people that no utter ass could wield the power he wields. It is not merely the flighty who are with him—he is supported by thousands of intelligent, scholarly, & patriotic Germans who fully recog-



nise his comic aspect & grotesque extravagances, yet who nevertheless see in him an amorphous force constituting the least of all available evils. It is not every nation that can evolve a real Mussolini. Incidentally—the ancient gentlewoman who lives downstairs in this house (a Yankee teacher of German, & life-long Germanophile, who—though the daughter of a Baptist minister—became an ardent Catholic a decade ago) has just returned from a three-months' tour of Germany & Austria, & finds that the morale & general condition of Germany are infinitely better than they were last year. Reports of "barbarism" are incredibly magnified—life in general going on much as usual. She was treated with uniform courtesy everywhere—though the anti-German touchiness over the Czecho-Slovakian border amused her. They spurn German & Austrian money, & refuse to guide tourists to monuments or historic sites connected with Teutonic celebrities or events. And so it goes. I am far from a Nazi, & would probably get kicked out of Germany for my opinions regarding the universe, the facts of science, & the rights of free aesthetic expression—but at the same time I refuse to join in the blind herd-prejudice against an honest clown whose *basic* objects are all essentially sound despite the occasionally disastrous extremes & absurdities in his present policy. It may be that Hitlerism's function will be to point out certain needs which wiser heads & hands will ultimately rectify in a more moderate way—not only in Germany but in other nations where similar needs or problems exist. But hell! how I am filling up space!

Yes—little Bho-Blök, the Daemon Lama of Leng, is certainly quite a boy, & his pictures display a surprisingly natural talent. I think the flippancy of some of his titles is due to intentional irony—one would have to see the pictures in question to judge. Klarkash-Ton recently praised a diabolic crayon sketch of his entitled *Dine & Dance*. I should have thought *Suicide in Costume* would have been right in his line. On the whole, I think the kid has more talent—or at least, a better-developed talent—in drawing than in writing, though he appears to take the latter more seriously than the former. Still—his prose is away ahead of mine at his age, & all its faults are apparently those of youth—extravagance & overcolouring. Comte d'Erlette has done him great good by viciously tearing some of his things to pieces & reducing the fragments to ashes & vapour. As for taste—of course he is essentially immature as yet. To be blind to realism argues a callous spot—though

it is a kind of callosity which the years dispel. I had a vilely narrow taste at 16 or 17—phantasy or nothing! Young Bloch is worth watching. A vast ability of some sort is seething inside his head, & the results will be bound to come out. . . . .

I fully agree with you concerning the importance of Proust, even though my reading of him has not gone beyond *Within a Budding Grove*. I must continue at least through *The Guermentes Way*—which I see has just made the Modern Library. Assuredly, I don't believe the 20th century has so far produced anything to eclipse the Proustian cycle as a whole. As illustrated in the paragraph you quote, he captures significant avenues & details of life that everyone else has overlooked or understressed.

. . . . . Autumn has now descended like a pall, & my sessions of outdoor reading & writing are perforce drawing to a close. I have, though, had some delightful rural walks north of the city—in the Lincoln Woods region so rich in vistas of ancient countryside & steepled villages. . . . .

Yr most obt hbl Servt  
E'ch-Pi-El

649. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Sept. 27, 1933

Dear Miss Sully:—

. . . . . The old Newburyport churchyard is very alluring—and I am glad to learn that you had a chance to explore old "Joppy".\* Newburyport is one of the most hauntingly quaint towns in America, & its spectral hush & semidesertion make a churchyard a very

\* *Joppy* (early Am. rustic pronunciation of *Joppa*) is a local nickname for Newburyport. It was formerly restricted to the small hamlet of tiny fishing cottages at the extreme south of the town, on the shore—being in turn derived from the Joppa (pron. "Joppy") Wharf & Joppa Bank (sand-bar) in the harbour. Probably the original source is the old Biblical Joppa (modern Jaffa) in Palestine—which had a harbour choked with sand like Newburyport's. The old Puritans always had their eyes open for Biblical analogies, & drew briefly on Holy Writ for their local & personal nomenclature.

appropriate symbol for it. Oliver Wendell Holmes (for it was declining even in his day) once remarked that Newburyport is the one American city which is *finished*. In Haverhill, 8 miles up the Merrimac, they call N. "The City of the Living Dead". Did you see Whittier's birthplace in E. Haverhill & his home in Amesbury? Glad all three gravestone periods were represented, but sorry no fountain was on top. This design certainly seems to have been less popular on the whole than the contemporary urn & weeping-willow. Hope you saw all the representative features of Newburyport—the old church where George Whitefield is buried, the 1806 Unitarian church, the grass-grown waterfront, the stately breadth of High St., with the once-bedizened mansion of "Lord" Timothy Dexter, the central Market Square with its 1815 brick buildings, & the unpaved, sidewalkless pre-Revolutionary streets with rotting, half-deserted houses south of the Square. When I first saw Newburyport I mistook the central square for a mere neighbourhood shopping centre, & kept on the car (it *was* a trolley-car then) in the expectation of reaching some real "downtown". Only when the line ended—at the "Joppa" fishing hamlet—did I realise that the half-deserted square I had passed through was actually "downtown"!

.....

Yr oblig'd & obt Servt  
HPL

650. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Irem—the City of Pillars  
Sept. 29, 1933

Dear Malik:—

..... As for the delights of thunderous, meteoric Juggernauting through mysterious & briefly glimpsed zones of strange light, shadow, mist, & contour—a process bearing a touch of the cosmic in its likeness to a comet's course through unforeseen, unplumbed spatial abysses—I can certainly understand your attitude to the limit, & share it under many circumstances. The difference is that I would want my cosmic hurtlings to involve some territory whose details did not fascinate me—some raw, modern or untraditional region which I'd never care to linger over in detail. Otherwise a hasty passage would produce such bitter tantalisation that the enjoyment of the dash would be overbal-

anced. Another point where we differ is that of sightseeing. Unlike you, I am able to extract a great amount of satisfaction from a very brief glimpse of a quaint or beautiful place, provided I can include all the salient features. This is probably because the sensation of *time* is highly subjective with me—the ticking of the clock or turning of the calendar leaves meaning relatively little to me as contrasted with the sheer, nonchronological flow of events. Many technically long periods seem negligibly brief to me if not filled with memorable landmarks; & conversely, I can extract a sense of ample time from any wide variety of vivid & pleasing impressions, no matter how technically swift (within certain limits, of course) their succession may be. I can see any *average* city quite adequately in a single day, although of course I *prefer* to have unlimited leisure. (This would not, of course, apply to places like Quebec, Charleston, or New Orleans, which contain too much vital detail for quite so brief an assimilation.) When I know I shall have very little time in a place, I always try to get as thorough as possible a book & map knowledge of it in advance. I then know about what I want to see and how to get to it, & can guess or deduce what sections are likely to be old & interesting. With this preparation, & with the aid of feet, street-cars, & (in certain cases) rubberneck-wagons, there are comparatively few towns which one cannot cover in a day, provided one eschews long visits to museums & long surveys of interiors. That single day will give all the salient & typical landscape & architectural vistas, will make one familiar with the principal buildings of interest, & will indicate the general atmosphere & colour of most of the important sections. Keeping one's attention alert, & not allowing impressions to overlap or coalesce, it is possible to make each momentary glimpse so keen & inclusive that the mind registers a picture conveying a sensation of substantial time. I can attest this from personal experience, for circumstances have forced me to begin acquaintance with many places—Portsmouth, N. H., Newburyport, Mass., Washington, D. C., Vicksburg, Miss., Mobile, Ala., Key West, Fla., Petersburg, Va., Montreal, &c—on a one-day basis. From each of these I carried away a sense of genuine familiarity & when I was able to revisit certain ones I found that my brief first impression was perfectly valid. Revisiting a one-day-glimpsed city can be very much like a homecoming if the first glimpse be observant, inclusive, & emotionally well-assimilated. If the place is a large one, a preliminary orientation-



tour on a sightseeing coach is the best general introduction. This translates the map into concrete terms, & gives the explorer a solid basis for special expeditions later in the day. Of course, there are many places of which it is impossible to get good guidebook-&-map material in advance. In such a case, the best way is to seek out the chamber of commerce at the earliest possible second & cram one's head & pockets with all the dope obtainable either there or at recommended bookstores. That's what I had to do at Vicksburg, & got & retain to this moment a highly vivid picture of the mellow, shabby old town on its high river-bluff. That's also what I did at Montreal—aided by trips in sightseeing 'busses & trolleys. Naturally, all this postulates sufficient interest to make one unsparing of his feet. Nothing but brisk, tireless walking—even when supplemented by occasional transportation facilities—will enable one to pick up the right variety of impressions. Cruising around in a juggernaut won't do it—valuable though such a thing is for *non-urban* exploration. I was taken around Plymouth by car in 1926, & yet what I saw then was nothing as compared with what a pedestrian tour showed me in 1931. Of course, one-day exploration is best in summer, when the available daylight period (especially in the north) has hours more than in winter. With 2, 2½, or 3 days a marvellously close acquaintance with a city can be obtained if the time be well-crowded. My first trip to Quebec allowed only 2½ days, & yet I returned home with a virtually complete picture of the place—so that it was old familiar ground during my two subsequent visits. Adding all the days up, my three trips combined have given me little more than a week on Quebec soil, & yet I feel I know that city as well as Providence. I have traversed the full length of every notable street in the old section, have seen all the buildings of interest, have absorbed the landscape from every angle, & have recorded numberless little atmospheric details from the wooden suburban sidewalks, outside staircases, & NE STATION-NEZ PAS signs to the policemen's white helmets, prevailing cloud-formations, & constant music of chimes & clapping horses. However—that's not saying that I wouldn't like to spend weeks in Quebec, rolling around at leisure amidst the atmosphere & colour I have absorbed so swiftly & concentratedly. But if I *can't* get the big dose I'm willing to take a small one! Luckily, I did have liberal time-allowances in New Orleans, Charleston, & St. Augustine—though I'd like to spend months more in each. I surely hope you'll juggernaut around to Quebec some

time. If you're then looking for a guide, you'll find my application high up on the waiting list!

I followed your analysis of *The Hand of Hassan* with the keenest interest, in many cases finding my own estimates of your purposes amply confirmed. The job is certainly one of the cleverest imaginable, & you manage very well to remove the plot from the realm of sheer abstraction. I can appreciate fully the extent to which an adroit & determined writer is able to circumvent the worst limitations of the pulp medium—although that does not alter the fact that this purely artificial burden (a burden not imposed by the legitimate demands of aesthetics, but by the ignorant, capricious, & irrelevant demands of those who have no interest in intrinsic merit & who, from their motives, have no right to make demands) represents a sheer waste of energy which any but a supercharged human dynamo would find disastrous. A writer with only the average store of energy has none to spare for things that are not essential. It may be that he could, through a dreary mental straining unrelieved by the zest which accompanies *artistically necessary* effort, succeed in the purely mechanical (but aesthetically meaningless & irrelevant) feat of producing a tale at once literally respectable & acceptable to the low-grade tradesmen of the editorial racket; yet when he has done this, he has *achieved nothing whatever* in the direction of anything he wishes or respects. The excess of exhausting labour he has spent in suiting the freaks of illiterates has not carried him a millimetre nearer to his one legitimate goal of emotional catharsis & harmonious expression, but has on the other hand lowered his vitality & creative energy, dampened the subconscious creative impulse which alone produces really powerful material, & confined him to a single set channel which—though he may have manipulated it till it does not flagrantly violate any aesthetic canon—is *certainly not better* than what he would have naturally used, & *probably* much worse. As an artist, he has flung away priceless strength to no purpose—wearing himself out in producing something *not as good* as he would otherwise have produced. No triumph is a real triumph unless it serves an end which the victor respects—& commercial advantage is an end which one can hardly respect unless one happens to be of a certain temperament. When so much ill-to-be-spended energy has to go into a field bringing no artistic return whatever, it is natural for the artist to prefer to *separate* his industrial from his personal life—using for honest, straightforward, non-pseudo-

literary work of any sort the vast fund of energy which would have to be sunk futilely in his productions (& generally with a deleterious effect) in order to twist them into industrial material. All this, however, postulates the man of merely average or (like myself) sub-average energy—having no application to human dynamos like you & Derleth, who can pour out any amount of calculative cerebration independently of imaginative stimulus & without feeling the difference. Youse guys are damn lucky—but we plodders can't safely follow you any more than an average citizen can safely follow a tight-rope walker.

What you are too lucky to be able to realise is that for a small-time writer *the whole bottom drops out of the creative process the moment it becomes consciously calculative*. Art is not the devising of artificial things to say, but the mere saying of something already formulated inside the artist's imagination & automatically clamouring to be said. That is the genesis of virtually every aesthetic product worth classifying as such. Art is potent only to the extent that it is unconscious. Of course, a great deal of careful conscious shaping is necessary, but this is always backed by a tense & effective emotional stimulus *as long as it is confined to the improvement & clarification of the original natural conception*—i. e., as long as it amplifies & promotes the basic subconscious desire which motivates & gives birth to the given aesthetic attempt. Even a comparatively sluggish & easily fatigued calculative intellect (like mine) can be spurred into fairly effective performances when the process promises to help in the fulfilment of the original subconscious expression-impulse. The hope of an adequate reward—a reward which seems adequate as measured by the then-ruling desire—is a stimulus of supreme potency. But set that same intellect to a calculative task *not* connected with the fulfilment of the dominant urge—a task such as the laborious arrangement of expression to suit an artificial end *not connected* with the intrinsic perfection of the expression itself—and all emotional stimulus is lacking. The negative stimulus afforded by the fear of starving is not at all like the positive stimulus afforded by the desire for expression, dream-capture, or imaginative expansion. It produces—or tends to produce—a sort of paralysing desperation *hostile* to clear thinking rather than the expansive glow which strengthens, quickens, & fertilises thought. Thus the under-energied artist who finds no difficulty at all in arranging literary details *conducive to his own aesthetic ends*, encounters an unscalable barrier

of exhausting & repulsive toil when confronted with the profitless & irrelevant task of artificially twisting his product—without hope of improvement & with vast likelihood of debasement—into some meaningless shape dictated by empty conventions which his whole nature execrates as disgustingly uncivilised & outside the normal field of consciousness of a gentleman. What happens when such an average-energied or under-energied artist attempts to link his personal expression with business depends altogether on the man himself, & on the attendant circumstances. In cases where the person has varied interests & holds on life—where his sense of integrity & existence is not bound up in the task of saying something which desperately clamours to be said—the solution is often a complete surrender of self-expression. Then, when the writer (no longer an artist) has ceased to have anything to say, there is no longer any emotional obstacle to the commercial juggling of rubber-stamp situations in accordance with the low-grade market's whims. While still lacking any *stimulus* for work, there is at least no *handicap*—& if ordinary cleverness be present, the writer can often succeed in gauging & pandering to the fickle boob-market—which he will do without any of the efforts at compromise made by the super-energied man, since his victory in cheap fields will have crushed within him that sense of integrity which makes the super-energied hack still wish to retain something of artistic verity. True, he is not likely to produce any more art. That side of his life has been killed off. But if it was not his dominant & pivotal side, the loss is no greater than other curtailments of personality common in a barbarism where the profit-motive is forced on large numbers of cultivated persons. When, however, the capture of dreams & the utterance of dimly adumbrated conceptions *is* the primary & crucial element in a man's life—as it indubitably is in a substantial number of cases—then the attempt to suit artificial & contemptible tradesmen's whims is foredoomed to failure except among the super-energied. Vast & insuperable emotional dykes are subconsciously reared against the diversion of intellection to base & ulterior objects, so that the listless & reluctant struggle toward industrialism can hardly be more than a dull tragedy consuming all & yielding nothing. It may kill the artist, but it will never make a businessman of the corpse. Nothing which is forced out of one at the price of his imaginative life is ever likely to have enough substance & skill to suit even the mud-stuck threepenny cynics of the pulp. Compromise



is impossible when the artist has not enough excess energy to make the irrelevant intellectual manipulations other than a prostrating & usually self-defeating drain. Remember that the slightest departure from the single aim of self-expression puts an instant damper on the very springs of creative zeal & creative intellect in the person of average or sluggish energy. The obstacles are too great to get around. Thus (in cases of average energy or less) when one bases one's life & self-respect on imaginative sincerity, it is really a bad business policy to try to tamper with self-expression or fuse one's dreams with the hard-boiled job of squeezing money out of indifferent & stereotyped tradesmen. It is bad business because it gets one nowhere. There isn't any money in it . . . . an argument which even a tradesman can recognise as valid. When the only thing in life that one wants to do is to express himself aesthetically, it is foolish to embark on any course which will almost certainly defeat that end (though of course a good businessman doesn't even suspect what this is all about)—& *doubly* foolish when (here the business-man assents) that suicidal sacrifice will never lead to even the hollow compensation of material profit!

The gist, of course, is simply this: that for certain types of person the energy which would have to go into the artificial & repulsive task of hack-adapting would be largely wasted, & in any case grossly *disproportionate* as compared with its potentialities in other commercial fields where no disgust-barrier operates. If I reserve a certain quantity of mental energy from my personal & creative life to devote to the shelter-&-nourishment-acquiring process, I want that energy to go as far as possible & to be wasted as little as possible . . . & experience seems to show that it would go farther & bring better returns in some simple, honest, & non-charlatanic occupation like drug-clerking or bookkeeping or bricklaying—an occupation of a straightforward, need-filling sort without the servile taint of pandering & wheedling—than in any field which involved the element of mockery, of degrading parody, or of the diversion of exhausting intellection to an ulterior, irrelevant, & aesthetically wasteful aim. That is why I'd give a good deal for a real job, if I only knew how to go about looking for such a thing. My great mistake was in my younger days, when I thought that actual literary effort would surely manage to earn me a living somehow, some day. Had I known then what I know now, I would have hastened to fit myself for some steady routine work—of a sort mentally unexact enough to leave my

creative imagination free—as soon as my health became tolerable, & the ultimate exhaustion of drastically diminished resources apparent. But alas, these sensible perspectives generally come too late!

But remember that these observations do not apply to the super-energized, to whom the diversion of intellection to artistically irrelevant ends does *not* constitute a ruinous drain. Despite all that I have said, I appreciate nonetheless your own point of view—equally valid for the more fortunate type of person it concerns.

As for types of fiction—I hope you don't assume that I regard the weird tale as a superior form. Probably you don't, but one of your observations makes me anxious to rub the point in. My own devotion to this kind of thing is a sheer accident of personality which only a psychiatrist, biologist, geneticist, or what-the-hell could ever hope to trace to a source or sources—I have never even dreamed of injecting such a personal bias into any general critical outlook. The proper function of a short story is to reflect powerfully a single mood, emotion, or authentic situation in life—and when you consider what a slight part the weird plays in our moods, feelings, & lives you can easily see how basically minor the weird tale must necessarily be. It *can* be art, since the sense of the uncanny is an authentic human emotion, but it is obviously a narrow & restricted form of art. I am sincerely sorry that my area of sensitiveness is so restricted as to make this the only province in which my urge for expression is really poignant & compelling. When I say that I can write nothing but weird fiction, I am not trying to exalt that medium but am merely confessing my own weakness. The reason I can't write other kinds is not that I don't value & respect them, but merely that my slender set of endowments does not enable me to extract a compellingly acute personal sense of interest & drama from the natural phenomena of life. I know that these natural phenomena are more important & significant than the special & tenuous moods which so absorb me, & that an art based on them is greater than any which fantasy could evoke—but I'm simply not big enough to react to them in the sensitive way necessary for artistic response & literary use. God in heaven! I'd certainly be glad enough to be a Shakespeare or Balzac or Turgenev *if I could*! If I should try to write a story outside the weird area which engrosses my emotions & drama-sense, the result would be drearily *lifeless & artificial*, as all mainly objective work is. Not that any *repulsion* would be involved—the problem of course has

no point of contact with the problem of insincere hack-writing previously discussed—but merely that a motive force & fine sense of zest & values would be lacking. I would heartily respect my medium, & would not regard as wasted any intellection spent on the solution of artistic problems of expression. I would, moreover, take a genuine satisfaction in any vivid capture of reality which I might be able to effect. So far, so good. But—unfortunately—there would always be the handicap of *having nothing to say*. I have no subconscious, ready-formed conceptions of a realistic sort. Whatever I treated of would have to be dragged in from outside, & would consequently have to be handled without the innate fire which animates any true work of art, however humble. I might, through study, produce something coldly correct & devoid of aesthetic gaucheries or untruths—but it would be a dead, mechanical thing unacceptable to others & unsatisfying to me because it would not involve the expression of a preëxisting urge. I respect realism more than any other form of art—but must reluctantly concede that, through my own limitations, it does not form a medium which I can adequately use. Even the faking of realistic fiction would be a thing of infinite difficulty for me, since my lack of vital interest in the details of daily life has caused me to remain blind to all these typical particulars about men & their customs & transactions which are so essential to the equipment of the realist. You know, by instinct & from observation, how different people react in different situations—while with me such knowledge is vague, generalised, remote, & second-hand. You have a thousand homely customs & processes at your fingertips—whereas to me such things as stock exchanges, gasoline motors, police procedure, night clubs, & so on are so unknown or dimly reported as to be little better than half-fabulous. That is, my knowledge of the intimate details of the material background of all but a small segment of life is so unbelievably slight, that it would require years of special study to enable me to handle even the scenery of a varied body of contemporary realistic fiction.

Now as to the *action* or *mystery story*, & whether I consider it “intrinsically base”—let me say that I do not consider any story base as long as it honestly & accurately reflects a human mood, feeling, or situation. There are no doubt many genuine moods, feelings, & situations involving violent overt events & sudden revelations; hence we may not justly object to any tale depicting them sincerely & in the pro-

portion in which they normally occur in life. But this holds good only so far as a tale is a natural expression of a preëxisting feeling. Most certainly I cannot endorse as artistic a tale, which crowds “action” to an extent unrepresentative of life, or which deliberately concocts mysteries & thrills to gratify an exaggerated & unrealistic taste. This is simply showmanship or catering—not the process of catharsis or expression which is art. The result is tinsel—it does not convince or satisfy the adult reader. When we see such a thing we do not thrill with the illusion of witnessing a fragment of life. We recognise the dreary stage-properties & notice the familiar wings & drop-curtains & masks before we realise that they are supposed to be arranged into a story. You say that all story tempo is essentially unnatural—which is certainly true as regards the conventional “plot” story. But I do not regard the conventional story as art at all—except now & then by accident. It is the freer, looser-knit sort of tale which O’Brien’s anthologies feature that raises short story writing to an art. I’ll never get that far—but I appreciate the thing from the outside! And of course I realise that there are infinite gradations between the purely charlatanic concoction & the purely aesthetic tale. One must not expect perfection, but must merely do the best one can.

Blessings of the Prophet

4 ? ? ?

651. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Antient Woodland of Quinsnicket—  
Shivering amidst autumnal splendour.  
Octr. 1933

Imam of Investigative Invincibility:—

Well, well! The old man’s still out in the open! But though it’s quite oke for brisk walking, it ain’t so good for settin’ down and writin’. Hard work guiding the muscles of my pen hand, for I doubt if the thermometer is over sixty-eight degrees. Glorious autumnal scenery. I’ve spent the last week tramping over archaick rustick landskips, searching out areas still unspoiled by modernity. One or two disappointments—like that road we travers’d last August—but other discoveries make up for ’em. . . . Some of these inland villages are in-



effably beautiful and unspoil'd. Hell! I didn't know what a hinterland lay just back of the familiar scenes of my long lifetime!

Getting too cold to write—this is like trying to engrave the Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin amidst a fit of palsy!

Yrs. for orthodoxy—  
Theobaldus

652. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Primal Basalt Bridge over the  
black and oily River Gner.  
Time of the Bulbous Shape's  
passage up-stream.  
Oct. 3, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I welcomed *The White Worm* when it reached me, and will forward it conscientiously in the direction indicated. I've given Lumley Comte d'Erlette's address in case he doesn't know it already. Nggrrrhh . . . what a revelation! Thank God you spared your readers the worst and most paralyzing hints—such as the secret of Yilkilth's origin, the reason why it bore certain shapes not of this planet, and the history of Rlim Shaikorth before he oozed down to the solar system and the earth through the void from \_\_\_\_\_ . . . . . but I must not utter that name at which you, and Gaspard du Nord, and Eibon himself grew silent! Altogether, this is a stupendous fragment of primal horror and cosmic suggestion; and I shall call down the curses of Azathoth Itself if that ass Pharnabazus does not print it. Good old Lumley will devour it avidly and with real appreciation. He is surely an unique survival from the earth's mystical childhood—a combination of priceless credulity and gorgeous Munchausenism. I think I've told you about his claims of extensive travel in China, Nepal, and all sorts of mysterious and forbidden places, and his air of familiarity with such works as the arcana of Paracelsus, Hermes Trismegistus, Albertus Magnus, Apollonius of Tyana, Eibon, von Junzt, and Abdul Alhazred. He says he has witnessed monstrous rites in deserted cities, has slept in pre-human ruins and awaked 20 years older, has seen strange elemental spirits in all lands (including Buffalo, N. Y.—where he frequently visits a haunted valley and sees a white, misty Presence), has written and

collaborated on powerful dramas, has conversed with incredibly wise and monstrously ancient wizards in remote Asiatic fastnesses (one of them, referred to as The Oriental Ancient, was in Buffalo last year and had several solemn conclaves with Bill, but has now returned to his own far-off demesne at the edge of the world!), and not long ago had sent him from India for perusal a palaegean and terrible book in an unknown tongue (unknown and primordial tongues are as easy to Bill as high-school Latin to you and me!) which he could not open without certain ceremonies of purification, including the donning of a white robe! He has, of course, suffered persecution and ridicule, but nothing can swerve him from his devotion to the secret and soul-shattering lore of the nether cosmic gulfs! His own sorceries, I judge, are of a somewhat modest kind; though he has had very strange and marvellous results from clay images and from certain cryptical incantations. He is firmly convinced that all our gang—you, Two-Gun Bob, Sonny Belknap, Grandpa E'ch-Pi-El, and the rest—are genuine agents of unseen Powers in distributing hints too dark and profound for human conception or comprehension. We may *think* we're writing fiction, and may even (absurd thought!) disbelieve what we write, but at bottom we are telling the truth in spite of ourselves—serving unwittingly as mouthpieces of Tsathoggua, Crom, Cthulhu, and other pleasant Outside gentry. Indeed—Bill tells me that he has fully identified my Cthulhu and Nyarlathotep . . . . . so that he can tell me more about 'em than I know myself! With a little encouragement, good old Bill would unfold limitless chronicles from beyond the border—but I like the old boy so well that I never make fun of him. He is really tremendously likeable—and with a spontaneous gratitude and generosity that are almost pathetic. Whenever I can do him a favour I like to—such as revising his occasional bits of verse. In turn, he has given me two highly welcome books—a *Vathek* with Mahlon Blaine's illustrations, and Edward Lucas White's *Lukundoo*. His reading has really—apart from all romanticised claims—been unusually wide, and his taste in weird literature is emphatically and unmistakably good. Old Bill may be a character, but he's no fool—not by a long shot! You are one of his idols, and *The Double Shadow* will without doubt form a high spot in his library—along with *Geber*, *Pythagoras*, and the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*.

... By the way—I had a hell of a dream lately, which so impressed our young friend Bho-Blôk that he's going to write a story around it. I seemed to be clambering over the steep tiled roofs of ancient gabled houses in a mediaeval town by full moonlight, in company with some 15 or 20 other men under the direction of a young officer in a silken robe who shouted orders from the ground—where he sat on a great black horse. We were all in a costume which could not have been later than the 15th century—hose, tight jacket, round-cut hair, and peaked cap with feather. We were hunting desperately for some Thing of primal evil which was infesting the town, and against which all exorcism had proved vain. As weapons we had a kind of shining metal talisman like an Egyptian ankh—nearly everyone being so armed. We held our ankhs high up in our right hands, and as far from us as possible. After an endless lapse of time we actually nosed the Thing out and began closing in on It with our ankhs, of which It was obviously afraid. We, though, were even more afraid. It was a black, rubbery Thing with bat-wings and a queer face like an owl's—about the size of a large dog. It began to cheep and titter hellishly when we scrambled closer to encircle It as It crouched against a huge stack chimney. One man had a great *net* in which he evidently hoped to bag It. Then suddenly It soared up out of our reach on those evil bat wings which we had thought merely rudimentary and unusable—and darted dizzily downward toward the ground. Or rather, toward our leader as he sat on his horse. The officer gave one great cry—but the Thing was on him. As It touched, It began to *coalesce* hideously with Its victim, so that within a moment there bestrode that great black horse a nameless hybrid in the robe and cap of our leader, but with the accursed, owl-like black face of that malign spawn of the pit. At last—as we paused in a paralysis of fear—It put spurs to Its horse and began galloping away—turning only once to emit that monstrous titter. Then It was gone—and I awaked. That was all. Not enough for a story, though I am curious to see what little Bloch will make of it. . .

Yrs. for the 7th Rune of Eibon—  
E'ch-Pi-El

653. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 • 5 • 33

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... My aunt is making very good progress these days—being all around the house on crutches, outdoors 3 times & probably being almost ready to graduate to a cane. Of course she cannot go downstairs except very slowly, but we have installed an electrical device to open the front door from the second floor—a virtual necessity when I am not available. We dispensed with the nurse two weeks ago—having my aunt's meals sent in from the boarding-house across the back garden. ....

..... By the way—"Prospect Terrace" is *not* another name for College St., but is a small park several blocks north of here, & situated like this house on the crest of the hill. It commands a peerless view of the lower town & of the purple hills of the open country beyond the town—and forms a magnificent place to lounge at sunset, when the sky flames red behind the great State House dome & the Gothic tower of St. Patrick's on Smith's Hill. It is an old haunt of mine—being not only near here, but on my direct route downtown from 10 Barnes St. I very frequently take my reading & writing out there. ....

I doubt if anything will come of the Knopf book business—although the firm did go so far as to ask the magazine *Weird Tales* about possible help in the advertising & marketing *if* they *should* publish the collection. It is very possible that they will hold on to the MSS. for a while in a tentative way—as they are doing with your poetry. As for the *Fantasy Fan*—I've just sent them an enlarged edition of my history of weird fiction (brought to date, the original having been written in 1926), which they intend to use (without remuneration, of course) as a serial. ....

EXTRA—A definite rejection from the Knopf firm has just arrived—precisely as I expected. ....



As to the "mission" of poetry—of course, by chance certain poems may put certain individuals in moods favourable to social evolution or welfare; but that is not the function of the art, nor is it likely that poetry is sufficiently read & assimilated by the executive majority to make it in any way an effective influence in remodelling the times. The world is too complex to be aided by the *general* & inclusive moods which poetry stimulates. The idea of thinking of social problems in terms of *general* moods or emotions is an essentially obsolete one—shown to be superficial & inadequate in the light of what we now know about human motives & relationships, & their infinitely diverse & largely hidden sources. Nothing can help society but hard, cool reason & prodigiously intricate scientific planning. All our modern problems hinge on *detail* & *quantity* instead of on general principles. They pose a job for the economist & the statesman—not the poet, preacher, or self-styled prophet. ....

All good wishes—

Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

654. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Octr. 6, 1933

Defeatless Diviner of Dynastick Derivations:—

.....  
One thing I like about this place is the refined and sedate club of felidae on the roof of a shed across the garden, in plain sight of my study windows. There are seldom fewer than one or two sleek old Toms at the "clubhouse", and occasionally as many as five or six or seven. Four of them belong to the antient gentlewoman residing two doors below here. In view of the prevalence of fraternity-houses in this neighbourhood, I am calling this pleasing sodality the Kappa Alpha Tau—which stands for Κρυσθων Ἀλφούρων Τάξις. The President (with whom I am become such good friends that he rolls over and kicks and purrs like a kitten upon my approach) is a huge, handsome black-and-white gentleman of antient lineage. The Vice-President is a gigantick tiger of prodigious dignity. The Secretary is a great Maltese with white spots. There is one very sprightly young fellow

(also a Maltese), smaller than the rest of the boys, who is undergoing initiation.

Yrs. for stones 'n' ancestors 'n' everything—  
Father Theobaldus

655. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Oct. 17, 1933.

My dear Morse:—

As for *The Festival*—after all these years it rather disappoints me. It sounds crude and forced and overcoloured—although it formed a sincere attempt to capture the feeling that Marblehead gave me when I saw it for the first time—at sunset under the snow, Dec. 17, 1922. . .

Yr. most obt. & hble. Servt.,  
HPL

656. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Octr. 17, 1933.

Dear Miss Sully:—

..... About the hidden churchyard of St. John's—there must be some unsuspected vampiric horror burrowing down there & emitting vague miasmatic influences, since you are the third person to receive a definite creep of fear from it . . . the others being Samuel Loveman & H. Warner Munn. I took Loveman there at midnight, & when we got separated among the tombs he couldn't be *quite* sure whether a faint luminosity bobbing above a distant nameless grave was my electric torch or a corpse-light of less describable origin! Munn was there with W. Paul Cook & me, & had an odd, unaccountable dislike of a certain unplaceable, deliberate *scratching* which recurred at intervals around 3 a. m. How superstitious some people are! As for the prosaically historical side—this graveyard

belongs to the Anglican church founded (as King's Church) in 1723 by the Huguenot Gabriel Bernon . . . who had fled from France, & had been deported from loyally popish Quebec. Bernon was *almost* but not quite my ancestor—his daughter Sarah having been the first wife of the Benjamin Whipple from whose *second* wife I am descended. The original church was a steeped Georgian affair, & the churchyard (whose interments go back to the 1720's) was not hidden until the house-building of many decades gradually closed it from the sight of both lower & (subsequently laid out) upper highways. But its hillside location must have made it picturesque from the first. The oldest graves are the lowest—nearest the church. Here may be found the impressive altar-tomb of John Merritt, the London merchant who came to Providence in 1750 & had the first coach, first astronomical telescope, & first globes in town. He built a country-seat over the hill in what is now our best residential district—my birthplace falling within the former limits of his domicil. When the unfortunate revolt of 1775-83 came, the rebels changed the name of the church from King's to St. John's. In 1810 the original steeped fane gave place to the present neo-Gothic edifice—the work of Providence's eminent architect John Holden Greene, who also designed the Unitarian church which you saw. In 1847-8, when Poe was much in Providence calling upon Mrs. Whitman in the neighbouring Benefit St. house, the churchyard formed one of his favourite rambles—its appearance being essentially the same as now. For many years there have been no burials there except of rectors of the church & bishops of the diocese—of which it was recently made the cathedral edifice. There would certainly be no more appropriate place for a tasteful suicide—I must remember it when I come to the end of my cash—but I don't recall reading of any there. I fear the recent tragic event must have occurred against a less vivid background—for Providence is well supplied with necropolitan expanses.

As for French-Canadians—I suppose they still feel a certain constraint toward the Anglo-Saxon, notwithstanding the fact that no overt trouble has occurred for generations. I noticed that the natives were not eager to point out Wolfe's ascending place on the Heights of Abraham. The French in Canada have always felt obliged to guard their language & institutions with fanatical zeal, hence have developed a curiously defensive & absorption-resisting attitude. They bring it with

them when they filter down the factory-lined river valleys into New England—so that they are today the least assimilable of our foreigners. In Rhode Island we have villages & towns every inch as French as Quebec or Trois Rivières—with grotesquely steeped churches (one or two even silvered in Quebec style), French or bilingual signs, black-gowned children taught in French parochial schools & knowing no English, shovel-hatted priests, & all the rest. Thus the Quebec milieu was not at all strange to me when I first saw it in 1930. Only the other day my aunt & I were taken for a motor ride including passage through Woonsocket, R. I.—& there we saw the typical *Maison à Vendre, Salle à Louer, Avis, Aux Soldats de la Guerre, 1917-18, Erice par Société Jacques-Cartier*, &c. which would have reminded you of Quebec & Montreal. One sometimes wonders whether Wolfe fought & perished in vain. In the 1680's Cotton Mather thundered in Catonian strains against the potential French invader—& behold! Just as he feared, French speech & French steeples now rise from the banks of Rhode Island's rivers!

I did not realise how low the general educational level of Quebec province is, although of course I knew that the sectarian limitations must make the culture very one-sided. I fancy that scholastic standards vary locally. Montreal is very proud of its schools, & a municipal law makes it obligatory that French be taught in the English schools, & English in the church-managed French ones. Thus all the population is becoming bilingual—every young Anglo-Montrealer knowing some French, & every French youngster knowing some English. The almost unparalleled degree of ecclesiastical domination in French Canada is certainly a retarding influence, & seems to arouse resentment in most visitors despite its picturesqueness . . . silver steeples, tonsured, sandalled, brown-robed friars, curiously coiffed nuns, &c. Peasants will have their religion, just as workmen will have their whiskey—but the financial drain & intellectual stultification sometimes seem a disproportionately high price to pay for the emotional soothing & titillation. If simple people must grovel before mythical conceptions, they might at least have a less expensive, retarding, & politically bothersome set of idols than those of an arrogant Catholic orthodoxy. Ordinarily I am not at all hostile to any sort of Santa Claus belief that anyone may wish to harbour, but of late years I feel that formal religions may cause much trouble in the period of social & economic readjustment



which lies ahead. All the powerful orthodoxies represent celestial projections of the now obsolescent political order, hence are pledged to defend it against all change. With a mechanised world of radically altered conditions, great changes will certainly be necessary from now on—yet all the official faiths recognise the extinct fabric as sacred, & blindly oppose any rational readjustment based on current needs. Of the various mythologies dominant in the Anglo-Saxon world one might form a scale based on relative absurdity. The least irrational is undoubtedly the very liberal theism represented by Dr. Fosdick & a few other actual thinkers among theologians. Next comes ordinary Unitarianism. Below this stand the loosely liberalised Evangelical sects whose orthodox tenets are quietly dropped one by one—Congregationalists, Presbyterians, & the best grade of Baptists. Next—though much higher as an *aesthetic* proposition—comes the Anglican church with its ingeniously evaded 39 articles, & after that (though higher up *aesthetically*) the ancient Catholic hierarchy with its impossible assumptions & eel-like logic-twisting. Lowest of all are the literal & orthodox evangelical sects—the dense & wilfully brainless Presbyterians, Baptists, & Methodists with their hysterical 'kiver to kiver' hill-billy gospel. And the Mormons, Christian Scientists, Holy Rollers, &c. fit in intellectually near the bottom, though social prestige gives some of these freak sects a borrowed impressiveness in certain local areas. All of these systems of blindly inherited tradition mean well, & all have the common usefulness of giving people the illusion of significance, direction, & value in the meaningless welter of conscious biological existence. They are the natural conceptions of a primitive & ignorant race, & embody a vast amount of really useful precept—the massed experience of mankind worked out by trial & error & given a fictitious heavenly authority. Certainly, it would cause chaos & harm to strip the world of their influence before a more rational psychological & ethical regimen, based on aesthetics & the actual mental & physical needs of the group in its existing environment, can be worked out & given effective force. We can see already the somewhat squalid decadence in emotional sensitivity & ethical harmony which prevails amongst these "sophisticates" who have lost their traditional faith without replacing it with a suitable aesthetic & practical substitute. The trouble is that substitutes can't be devised overnight. They have to grow by gradual accretion through long centuries of homogeneous & continuous ex-

perience before they can dominate the subconscious mind & provide that sense of direction & purpose which alone saves life from becoming a nightmare. Exceptions to this rule of gradual growth are very rare—coming only when some psychological accident raises up a new illusion so potently captivating that it sweeps all before it. Such an accident was the blazing up of Islam in the 7th century, & such, to a lesser & perhaps temporary degree, is the spread of communism (a religion despite its anti-theism) in modern Russia. Yes—I read George Moore in youth, & have always thought the Catholic system weak in its relation to individual character. Ironically, it is the least personally strengthening because it is the most purely *religious*. Theoretically—& as a matter of universal acceptance in pre-Reformation times—the function of religion is primarily to exalt & serve some mystical & intangible entity or group of entities outside mankind. It has relatively little to do with human conduct & character—hence in classical & pre-classical antiquity we find religion largely ritualistic & orgiastic, whilst conduct (based on reason) remained the province of the non-religious philosopher. Christianity—or rather, the Judaism on which it was based—was the first religion to take a primary interest in ethics & assume a responsibility for conduct & character. That was the unique contribution of the Semitic temperament to western civilisation—a very doubtful gift, since it removed ethics so completely from the aesthetic & logical field, transferring it to the jurisdiction of a mythical belief, that order & good taste threaten to vanish upon the ultimate & inevitable decline of the mythology. It would have been far better if we had kept our classical conception of ethics as a matter of beauty, good sense, & taste—the province of the non-supernatural philosopher—for its survival would not then have been so imperilled by the decline of religion. As Aryans, lacking the almost savage ethical sense of the desert-bred Semite, we are vastly better adapted to the conception of character as related to beauty, reason, & pride, than to the notion of *divine moral law*. Meanwhile our dominant religion has always been torn betwixt two tendencies—one to return to the Aryan concept & become a system of *mystical adoration* letting morals more or less slide or putting them on a bargaining & excusing basis, & the other to live up to the specifically Christian ideal & mould better & more harmonious characters in the immediate world around us. The first tendency breeds the Catholic psychology, & the second the Protestant. As a result, Catholics are more pure-

ly *religious*—since Protestants, being after all Aryans to whom the feverish Semitic religio-moralism is impossible save for brief periods (such as that of intensive & literal Puritanism in England & New-England), tend to lay more & more stress on human character & good deeds as opposed to mystical adoration, & therefore to exercise the functions of the classically conceived philosopher rather than those of the classically conceived priest. Today religion is on the decline as an influence—necessarily so, on account of what we have learned about the workings of the cosmos & of our own minds & emotions. It is, then, our task to save existence from a sense of chaos & futility by rebuilding the purely aesthetic & philosophical concept of character & cosmic pseudo-purpose—reestablishing a realisation of the necessity of *pattern* in any order of being complex enough to satisfy the mind & emotions of highly evolved human personalities. Obviously, the Protestant mind is the one best fitted to execute this important work—best fitted because it is the most philosophical & least religious. While Protestantism itself—as a supernatural faith—will decline because of the graduation of its thoughtful members to philosophic atheism or agnosticism (& of its thoughtless members to decadent & disorganised drifting), its actual work will continue as a sort of legacy. The framework it has bequeathed will serve a useful purpose—ensuring for the increasingly non-religious ethics of the future that force of *traditional continuity* which realists recognise as so essential to any really working system of action or emotion. The steeple, the Gothic tower, & the chromatic & magical twilight of painted windows can still have an effective psychological & social function long after their supernatural background is disavowed. But, of course, only if decadence, speed-&-quantity worship, anti-traditionalism, physical sense-worship, commercial-mindedness, & other emotionally coarsening & impoverishing influences can be held in check. The issue—survival or decadence—is still in doubt. And meanwhile the Catholic religion, a ceremonial & mystical institution independent of the details of conduct, plugs along in its ancient, deeply-rooted way—hampering good social organisation now & then, yet at least giving a consoling emotional opium to millions incapable of an aesthetic or philosophic attitude. There is always room for a kindly narcotic of this sort—at least, until reason solves the perhaps insoluble problem of bringing decent comfort & contentment of a material kind to the totality of the population.

..... Without doubt, the brutally primitive, experimental, socially irresponsible, animally capricious, aesthetically low-grade, callously anti-traditional, & really personally insulting amative attitudes of modern youth are primarily products of reaction against a system of interpreting human relationships which was fully as ridiculous & unrealistic—even if not so emotionally low-grade, anti-social, & insulting to human nature—as the existing opposite. Family organisation was an artificial fetish, & the nature of the emotional ties betwixt individuals was so wholly falsified & reduced to pompous sentimental fiction that no person of sense could survey the popular pretences—either in literature or in speech & manners—without a surge of hilarity, anger, or disgust, according to his temperament. Any *serious* romance of 50 years ago makes comic reading today—values, assigned motivations, human reactions, & so on. Hypocrisy was loathingly encouraged & exercised, & people in practice had to keep two sets of data in their heads—life & motives as outwardly represented, & life & motives as actually existing. Since the latter phase was not officially recognised, there was no unanimity of knowledge or attitude regarding it. Under religion & the self-deluding psychology it bred, such a mental muddle ought well remain permanent. The ethical code enjoined by religion was near enough to the optimism of common sense to prevent acute social friction, & the absurdity of the assigned motivations was suffered to remain unnoticed. When, however, religion began to crack, acute thinkers began to pause & ask themselves how real the commonly assigned values & motives might be, & thence, how much actual validity the existing emotional attitudes & social institutions might possess. That was the age of Ibsen, Wilde, Nietzsche, Shaw, & Wells . . . & presently of Freud, Adler, & Jung. After the analysis & shakeup it became pretty clear that the moving impulses of mankind, their relation to the basic structure of the universe, & their manner of operation under various given sets of conditions, were far—infinately far—from what orthodox religion & conventional sentimentality had assumed. Human instincts were boiled down to about a dozen, the relative strength of these in different individual types & races & under different environmental conditions was estimated, & the multifarious phenomena of human emotional life were traced to the interaction & mutual checking of these instincts, plus the infinite wealth of associational combinations which the memory, the symbolic imagination, &



the pattern-sense superimpose upon the primitive substratum. Men's feelings & moods & aspirations were seen to be neither "divine" nor universal, neither eternal nor simple & basic, neither consciously ordained nor related to any larger end—but rather to be the net chance results of a complex array of originally mechanical forces peculiar to the organisms bred in this part of the universe; have no larger connexions in time or space, & conditioned by their environment. What the oxidation of iron & the crystallisation of salt & the sensitivity of a sunfish & the anger of a fighting dog are on lower rungs of the organisational ladder, so are the dreams of a poet & the vision of a seer & the devotion of a lover amongst the complex types of organisation called advanced mammal primates, or human beings. Obviously, the flatulent old sentimentalities were pretty thin stuff!

And right here is where the difference between rational balance & hysterical decadence is illustrated. What has been shewn us? Simply that certain phenomena & conditions have *causes* & some *details of operation* other than what was formerly supposed. Has anything suggested that any of the phenomena or conditions ought to be changed or abolished? Obviously not. What we have found out means nothing one way or the other so far as recommending or condemning various courses goes. All it signifies is that supernatural constraint to one arbitrary course does not exist. It sends us back to nature—and any full-witted person realises that this means *our whole complex nature, including the most delicate associational sensitivities* rather than the merely instinctive or simian part of our nature—for guidance, & bids us reconsider our accustomed ways *only so far as is necessary to bring them into harmony with the one reasonable purpose of making the most of our opportunities for symmetrical development & permanent, heightened enjoyment under such environmental conditions as we have or can make*. To assume that the discovery of the mechanical & fortuitous nature of our complex higher emotions at once reduces those emotions to hypocritical ignominiousness, or even to mere equality with the dozen or so primitive dog-&ape instincts & emotions is a breach of logic so utterly childish, unjustified, & hilariously ridiculous that I honestly cannot see how any adult person of normal intelligence & grammar-school education can make it. It is to me one of those inscrutable mysteries beyond solution—like the sudden blight which caused the collapse of architectural taste in the Victorian age. I give

it up! What is this "young intelligentsia" driving at, anyhow? Don't they realise that the essence of all quality is *fineness of organisation*? What if the basic substance of a finely-wrought thing *is* the same as that of other coarsely wrought things? Is a delicate watch or micrometer no better than a horseshoe or flatiron merely because its chemical substance is similar? We know from observation, record, & analysis how infinitely keener & finer-evolved human life is, than primitive lower-animal life. We can recognise our superior grasp of the universe, & can feel the increased pleasure accruing from the exercise of many emotional & imaginative faculties instead of a pitiful few. This is intrinsic & absolute—if we keep our heads clear we don't need any "divine" nonsense to justify the more complex, delicate, & human aspects of life as opposed to the primitive & brutish aspects. The bottom hasn't dropped out of anything merely because we've made a discovery about the mechanism. Nothing of the *dignity & value of human life* has been lost in the change of perspective. And yet what nonsense certain poor devils (both on the theological & on the decadent side, as a matter of fact!) spout! Without a shadow of justification, the decadent *sophisticate* leaps to two *perfectly irrelevant* assumptions—first, that human nature, not being divine & cosmic, must necessarily be bestial; & second, that all highly evolved emotions must necessarily be valueless, non-existent, or reprehensible, *merely because they were formerly mis-explained*. As a complete & puerile violation of all logic, this modernistic philosophy furnishes a classic & immortal example! And yet, as I said at the outset, I can sympathetically understand the feelings of the decadent. He is so exasperated at the outrageous bull & crap of theology-dictated sentimentalism that he feels impelled to fly to the remotest possible extreme. The trouble is that this other extreme is just as silly & even more harmful & violative of richness in life than the first one! He doesn't realise this because he allows his first exasperation to cut off his mind & put blind emotion in the saddle. He feels so much that he doesn't think—hence peters out in futility & brutish degradation.

It is needless to say to persons of good sense & reflectiveness that the one rational object of life is—for all the absence of a deity or of a high-flown cosmic basis of thoughts & feelings—the harmonious utilisation & satisfaction of our existing equipment to the greatest possible extent; a pursuit which, in view of the well-known conflicts between

different tendencies & groups of tendencies within us, postulates an intelligent choice of keener, more permanent, & more rewarding faculties over duller, more transient, & less profoundly rewarding faculties for favouring & cultivation. This is not a theological or moral dictum—it is merely materialistic common sense. If it offends the “younger advanced intelligentsia” by sounding excessively like what ancient philosophers used to say, that’s just too bad . . . . . although the youngsters could realise if they’d stop to think that much of ancient philosophy & ethics comes primarily from plain observation & common sense. The trimmings of pomp & piety are tacked on later. It is true that cosmic “good” & “evil” do not exist—but it is also true that in human conduct & emotion-guiding there are certain courses which (environment being confined within given limits) tend to give profound & lasting satisfaction & expansion to a maximum of our faculties, & certain courses which yield a net return (whatever the momentary effect) of dissatisfaction & frustration. We don’t have to call such courses “good” and “evil”—it is never wise to become slaves to nomenclature—but it would be unscientific not to recognise them & differentiate betwixt their properties. So after all, the triumphant & blatant immoralist is in a pretty bad fix philosophically & scientifically. He hasn’t much ground to stand on. Unfortunately his voice isn’t impaired—so he still makes a great noise.

As for *details*—rational, materialistic ethics will of course have certain points of difference from theistic, traditional ethics; though the hidden rational factor in ancient morals, plus the present psychological value of continuity, will combine to make the future’s code much more like the past’s than the thoroughgoing modernist will relish. The decent citizen of the machine age will have a disconcerting number of points in common with the decent citizen of the Greek, Roman, mediaeval, & modern western civilisations. So far as the element of human affection is concerned, there is not nearly enough change to please the young Casanovas who aspire to the carefree refinements of the canine & feline worlds. In spite of their fine talk, & in spite of the mythical nature of that cosmically derived & mysteriously unalterable passion postulated by bygone sentimentalists, it remains a rather obvious fact that of the many perfectly separate elements which enter into any typical human (for there is no *one* thing which may be called love or affection; each individual emotion-group classified as such being a complex fusion of

various dissimilar factors acting accidentally toward the production of a given resultant expression), those which make for sudden, violent, & transient infatuation are the very lowest in the biological-psychological scale, whilst those which endure over long periods (& it is simply childish—a denial of obvious evidence—to ignore the thousands of well-defined & unmistakable cases of virtually permanent affection on record) belong to that higher, more complex, & more associative order which involve the recognition of finely evolved faculties in their object & afford deeper, maturer, & more poignantly developed psychological satisfactions in their possessor. In other words, when a “young modern” says that a temporary or at least limited affair of intense emotion is the only sort of romance really satisfying to him, he is merely confessing that his emotional development has remained at a rather simian level; that he is not seeking a companion to honour as a fellow human-being, but is looking for a fellow-ape with whom he may amuse his transient & superficial emotions after the casual fashion of the ape species. Without knowing it—for one must give him credit for his naive ignorance if possible—he is giving the momentary object of his doubtful affections the gravest possible insult; that of placing her on a level essentially sub-human, as one who does not possess the qualities which, in really equal & sincerely beloved human beings, elicit so varied & general an array of emotional bonds that the passing of the crude temporary factors is virtually unnoticed in comparison to the tremendous residue of really human affection (recognition of mental kinship, harmony of highly-developed emotions, piling up of tender symbolic & associative factors, &c.) which permanently remains. His is the essentially crippled, cheapened emotional nature which cannot envisage or experience fine shades & subtleties of feeling. He gets on finely with Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*, but doesn’t understand what the tale of Baucis & Philemon in the same author’s *Metamorphoses* is about. In this naive blindness he falls below even the callous gallants of antiquity; inso-much as they recognised standards but did not live up to them, whilst he recognises no standards at all. In defence of his position he points to the certainly large-enough number of persons who find permanent & congenial ties impossible of achievement. Here, again, he is exercising that childish lapse of logic which marks his estimate of human emotion as a whole. Merely because the world is haphazard & imperfect, with certain satisfactory adjustments attainable by only a part of the popu-



lation, he jumps to the erroneous & irrelevant conclusion that *nobody* can attain such adjustments; that those who say they do merely pretend it, & that it is a waste of time to seek such a type of felicity. In other words, because *some* people can't appreciate music, it is foolish for *anybody* to seek the pleasures of harmony. Because *some* are colour-blind, it is foolish for *anybody* to seek any art other than black & white. What crap! And yet these smart-aleck Lotharios call *themselves* acute & sophisticated, & brand the rational conservative as an outmoded fogey! As a matter of fact, the very growth of rationalism from which they draw their silly conclusions does much to emphasise the hollowness of their position—for with the decline of the crazy "one-great-love-in-a-lifetime" hallucination of Victorian days, & the disappearance of the savage anti-divorce prejudices of darker times, the number of permanently unadjustable individuals is bound to be vastly cut down through opportunities for the rectification of mistakes & the formation of new & sounder alliances with better prospects of dignified permanence. There is *less & less* excuse, rather than more & more, for abandoning the quest for that full & permanent union of psychological lives which is obviously the only real fulfilment of human affection on equal human terms.

It seems to me, then, clear that in spite of all his stale, misquoted Freud, his cleverly juggled divorce statistics, & his pompous anthropological extracts from Briffault & Calverton & other flashy conclusion-jumpers, the fickle young modern is holding & defending a false (& if he knew it, insulting) position when he rants in favour of canine romantic ethics. In view of what is known regarding the constituents of human affection, we cannot but conclude that he is upholding cheapness & inferiority against emotional richness & all that we truly respect. Whatever be the possibilities of error, delusion, & disappointment—and in what human venture are they absent?—it seems certain that any person possessing for another the equal & honourable affection which involves respect, congeniality, understanding, & recognition as a fellow human-being of intelligence, as well as the more glamorous temporary factors, will not wish or propose any union other than an open & socially acceptable one intended (whatever melancholy revision the future may perchance dictate) for permanent duration. I may be a crabbed bigot, but any other sort of romantic sighing to a daughter of mine, if I had one, would earn a modernistic gallant an extremely

decided momentum down those selfsame stairs which tripped my aunt, transmitted through a hard-soled #8 Regal! In dealing with "advanced & emancipated" youths of this sort, no one need feel impelled to exercise undue tact or harbour undue scruples. Good sense & good taste—proximate principles based on the real fulness of human nature—furnish solidly workable & wholly non-theological standards to which no soberly reflective person will be ashamed to be true. And no excuse is ever needed for acting according to such standards, or upholding them against any of the fly-by-night bolshevisms of fad, fashion, fever, & foolishness! Restoration ethics had their day—but the fame of "un-fashionable" Milton has lived longer than that of

... the sons  
of Belial, flown with insolence & wine.

Yr obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

657. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Oct. 17, 1933

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... My aunt is very much better—we take sizeable local walks now, & the other day went halfway down the hill to the School of Design art museum to see the new formal garden in the inner court. A fascinating place—I enclose a rotogravure view, which please return. Also enclose account of a gorgeous rainbow we saw. Best I ever saw in my life—positively apocalyptic! Lately my aunt has been taken on two fine long motor rides through the autumnal countryside. I went on both, & one took me through a magnificently unspoiled scenic region in Mass. that I never saw before—Westwood, Medfield, W. Medway, Franklin. Have also taken pedestrian trips in picturesquely deserted regions N. of Prov. End of season—not much more outdoor reading & writings. ....

Thanks, as usual, for the interesting cuttings. Here is the proof of an article of mine which may be of interest—from the coming issue of the Holland Socy's publication *De Halve Maen* (name of Henry Hudson's ship—the Half Moon), of which my friend W. B. Talman is

editor. As you see, NE is not without a trace of Dutch influence. Please return this sometime, though there is no hurry. I shall get extras of the paper, but want to circulate several copies.

Also enclosed with a request for ultimate return are 3 snaps of my present ancient abode—taken with a #2 Brownie which I bought 26 years ago—in far-off 1907. A sturdy two dollars' worth! .....

Yrs most cordially & sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

658. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Daemon-Curst Wood of Yoth.  
Hour that the livid, fungous  
Boughs Sway against the muttering Wind.  
Oct. 22, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

In my individual programme I have also been enjoying the sunlit autumn weather—some days being delightfully warm. On most afternoons I have taken long rural walks—riding out some main highway on a 'bus, and then cutting across country to some other bus-traversed highway on which I can return. In this way I have come upon some very wild stretches—untouched by modernity; and containing many magnificent vistas and innumerable ancient farmhouses. To me nothing on earth is more fascinating than my ancestral countryside with its rolling hills, valleys, brooks, old mills, stone walls, winding roads, gambrel-roofed farmhouses, rambling barns and byres, gnarled orchards on rocky slopes, farmyards now teeming with the varicoloured fruits of harvest-time, and glimpses of distant white steeples through the towering elms of sleepy villages. Ancient New England! And scenes like this (which can still be found by the careful searcher despite mechanisation, foreignisation, and decay) represent a settled, continuous life of three centuries suggesting the picturesque old world rather than the strident new. So many are the byways of this small state, that I have found several alluring regions never before visited by me. Yesterday I looked up an ancestral shrine I had always heard of but never seen—

the Thomas Clemence house beyond the village of Manton, west of Providence; built in 1654 and having an enormous pilastered chimney of stone. I found it fascinating—in excellent condition and very picturesquely situated—though an Italian suburb is creeping closer and closer to it. This afternoon I am north of the town—in the Quinsnicket or Lincoln Woods region which I have haunted all my life. I am seated at the bend of a road, looking off across the descending countryside toward Scott's Pond and the distant village of Saylesville beyond—a vista so idyllic that I cannot resist trying to convey an idea of it on this sheet. Whenever I see a landscape like this—whose beauty can't possibly be captured in words—I could kick myself or the Fates for my inability to draw and paint. Today is one of the last days I'll be able to do any reading or writing outdoors; for the temperature is falling, and I can't steer my finger-muscles when it's much under 70°. ...

By the way—apropos of our recent mention of odd atmospheric effects, I enclose a cutting of a recent rainbow which was undoubtedly the most impressive thing of the kind I have ever seen. On the evening in question the whole western sky was a seething lake of mysterious orange light, whilst roofs and windows toward the east blazed with celestial gold. I was going home from downtown, facing the ancient precipice atop which I live and admiring (as I have for a lifetime) the colonial gables and belfries and spires that picturesquely pierce its dense foliage. Suddenly I noticed a great prismatic bow above the centuried eminence, with the white Baptist steeple (1775) almost at its centre. The unparalleled vividness of the arc itself, the antique loveliness of the vista it framed, the apocalyptic glow on the opposite side of the sky, and the presence of a faint secondary arc outside the main one, all combined to make this the most notable rainbow within my memory. ...

Your unusual dreams are tremendously interesting, and much fuller of genuine, unhackneyed strangeness than any of mine. *Eiton enclarion!* Of what festering horror in space-time's makeup have you had a veiled intimation? The tower of evil child shapes is surely a tremendous conception—whilst the liquid dam ought to go splendidly in a story. Some months ago I had a dream of an evil clergyman in a garret full of



forbidden books, and of how he changed his personality with a visitor. Fra Bernardus of West Shokan is urging me to make a story of it.\*\* Then about a year ago I dreamt I awaked on a slab of unknown substance in a great vaulted hall, dimly and obscurely lit, and full of similar slabs bearing sheeted objects whose proportions were obviously *not human*. From every detail I gathered the horrible notion *that I could be nowhere on this planet*. I also felt that my own body was like those of the other sheeted shapes. But I waked up in very truth at this juncture, so that no *story* was even begun!

Yrs. for the Epiphany of Abhoth  
—E'ch-Pi-El

659. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

Oct. 24, 1933

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

The fascination of *words in themselves* is certainly very deep & potent for those who are truly sensitive to musical sound & subtle imaginative associations. I feel this fascination profoundly, & try to guard against succumbing to it so excessively that meaning will be sacrificed for mere verbal colour. One can run to disastrous excesses in this direction—Arthur Symons & the later Swinburne being typical victims of the tendency. Still, on the whole I think it is better to err on that side than on the opposite side of barren, unimaginative literalism. My own style is in a state of flux. The earlier things I wrote (like the reprinted *Festival*) were undeniably over-coloured, whilst my later stuff (*Witch House* &c.) tends to be diffuse. Just now I am pausing & taking stock, with a view to further experimentation. . . . .

I remain

Yrs most cordially & sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

\*\* After Lovecraft's death, Bernard Austin Dwyer excerpted from a letter to him an account of this dream in greater detail and submitted the fragment to *Weird Tales* where it was published in 1939 as *The Wicked Clergyman*. The other dream mentioned by Lovecraft has certain adumbrations in *The Shadow out of Time*.

660. TO JAMES F. MORTON

All-Hallows'

(October 31, 1933)

Star-Surpassing Summit of Systematic Searching:—

.. As for hitch-hiking—I have no prejudice either for or against, if the lifts come naturally and unsolicited. A gentleman never asks favours, but never hesitates to accept them when they are proffered. If a coach with a friendly driver happens to come along during an unpicturesque stretch, it is only the part of good sense to accept a ride until the landskip again becomes sightly enough to demand walking. Drivers vary in different parts of the colonies. The hard, suspicious, and largely foreign population of the North generally ignores the pedestrian. In the American and open-handed South, however, offers of transportation are universal—and so insistent in Florida that it is almost impossible to take a walk of any distance along a main highway without expending endless ergs of tact in declining courtesies. I *never* walked the full distance betwixt Dunedin and Clearwater in all my long stay in Pinellas County—the commonplace nature of the scenery making the feat rather futile. And yet I have *asked* for a ride only once in a long lifetime—on Tuesday, May 14, 1929, when I was in Hurley, N. Y. and missed the last stage-coach which would get me back to Kingston in time for the noon coach for New Paltz—missing which latter I would have to stay over in Ulster County another day. On that occasion I waved my hand at the first driver I saw—a genial giant on a Standard Oil truck—and was granted the desiderate boon despite a “No riders” sign . . . the g. g. perfunctorily warning me that Jawn D. wouldn't compensate my heirs if the damn thing blew up and sprinkled the wild domed hills with Theobaldian *dissecta membra*. I *did* catch the N. P. coach—by a hair's breadth—and had a great afternoon despite a rain which soaked all of me and most of my new-bought guide-book. That night I slept in Albany, and the next day made my only trip through the Hoosac Tunnel—to Athol—the Mohawk Trail coaches not having begun operations for the summer. Ah, me—life's vicissitudes! And my rain-soaked suit was press'd by Goodman J. Jasius, in Ex-

change Street over-against the Transcript office, whilst I writ a letter in a borrow'd pair of pantaloons. Those quaint old pre-depression days!

....

As for commerce—of course, some equivalent of it is more or less of a necessary evil. The objection is the psychology it breeds. He who has to calculate and match wits for his subsistence, develops a kind of unlovely caution and suspicious parsimony not possessed by the gentleman of estate, or the man who works for a salary, tills the soil, or exercises a profession primarily for its own sake. The trading and financial mind is the most repellent of all types—and it breeds a noxious and pervasive set of standards based on such false, artificial values as wealth for its own sake, industry as an end in itself, solvency as the supreme virtue, and so on. Its whole atmosphere is of pettiness, low cunning, greed, and bourgeois callousness to life's real values. ....

Yrs. for Hitler and Mustapha Kemal—  
Theobaldus

661. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

The Antient Hill  
November, 1933

Dear Bernardus:—

..... Well—I've read Weigall's *Wanderings in Roman Britain* at last, and parts of it were a real eye-opener. He has done a tremendous lot of original research—both historical and archaeological—and has shed any amount of light on that melancholy period so fascinating to me ..... the end of the Roman civilisation in the Imperial province of Britannia. To anyone who conventionally assumed (as I did—in my recent letter on the Arthur problem) that the Saxon conquest was virtually complete by 500 A. D., and that Arthur was a Cymric-speaking tribal chieftain, this new body of information (well-authenticated, and scarcely subject to dispute) is a knockout punch—something necessitating a complete revaluation of previously acquired ideas. So many of my earlier conceptions—on which my recent letter to you was based—are shewn to be outmoded, that I was on the point of writing you to cancel much that I said before. For one thing, get this: *Arthur was a Britanno-Roman who spoke Latin, wore the Roman helmet and armour, and fought the Saxons in order to save Britain for the Roman Empire,*

*whose authority was never repudiated despite the withdrawal of the legions and the collapse of the Western Emperor in 476.* Our idea of Arthur as a shaggy Welsh tribal chief was just as cockeyed as the conventional idea of him as a silken-tabarded Norman gallant. He was a Celtic-Roman whose name was Artorius, and whose idea of a fatherland was not that of a Brythonic-speaking wilderness of camps and thatched villages, but that of an orderly Roman countryside of villas and estates, and of settled towns and great cities with baths, amphitheatres, crowded streets, sewer-systems, central heating, works of art, and a Latin-speaking population. It was for a Roman world that Arthur fought—his role being like that of Syagrius, last of the Roman governors in Gaul, of whom I wrote some weeks ago.

As a preliminary, Weigall makes two points clear. First—that in spite of all our notions to the contrary, *Britain was thoroughly Roman.* The only Celtic-speaking tribes were in northern Scotland and western Wales. The bulk of the two provinces of Britannia Prima and Britannia Secunda were as Latin as Gaul or Spain—or Italy itself. All the natives spoke Latin and bore Roman names, and the great bulk of the Roman legionaries never left the island but settled down and married British wives. ....

The second point made by Weigall is what gives Point I a double significance in modern times—namely, that the Britanno-Romans were *not* extirpated by the Saxons, and that their blood is as plentifully represented in modern British veins as is that of the Saxons and Normans. No wholesale massacres, and very few limited ones (as of the Roman garrison at Pevensey on the South Coast) occurred, and the emigration to Brittany was of wild Welsh tribes rather than of the Britanno-Roman population. The provincials were not killed but enslaved or bound to the soil, and in two or three generations their fusion with the Saxons was complete. Long before the Norman conquest they had become thoroughly amalgamated and indistinguishable, since their dominant race-stock was so similar. Their *language and culture* were extirpated in a generation, but their *blood* has survived to the present as one of the three main streams in the English people. In other words, there is no question but that something like a third of my own personal blood ancestors bore Roman names, wore togas, spoke Latin, fought in the 2nd, 9th, 6th, and other Legions of the Imperial Roman Army, worshipped Apollo, Pan, Mithra, and Silvanus Cocidius at altars with



Latin inscriptions, lived in Roman villas or towns with baths, temples, and amphitheatres of classic design, and were proud to bear the designation "Civis Romanus". Of course, the visible and cultural connexion was effaced, so that our present heritage of Roman culture comes wholly through Gaul from the Normans. But the plain fact remains, that the forgotten blood link is there. Lineal ancestors of mine have had names like P. Sanfeius, T. Aurelius, M. Valerius, L. Claudius, and so on . . . and amidst the legionary mixture there must have been at least a *thin* strain of the *real* old Roman blood—the Oscan-Umbrian-Sabine-Samnite-Latian-Etruscan blend from Central Italy which produced the familiar Roman face with its broad brow and hawk nose. Also—less pleasing thought—there must be traces of Carthaginian, Syrian, Slav, Egyptian, Persian, Arab, and whatever other Oriental and Sarmatian stocks formed part of the army in Britain. And Greek, of course, though one doesn't object to that. . . .

Grandpa L. Caelius Rufus

662. TO ROBERT BLOCH

Daemon-haunted Forest of  
Gnopf—Hour that the  
Boughs move against the Wind  
(circa November, 1933)

Dear Bho-Blök:—

. . . I am always a trifle distrustful of the legal and oratorical type of mind, whose prime skill is in bringing others to a given point of view. This type has a fatal tendency to become devoted to a given cause or object rather than to the absolute impartial and non-human *truth*—so that when some unexpected slight of evidence alters the validity of a case, the oratorical defender sometimes sticks to the old position blindly, merely because he has come to think of it as "his", instead of following the evidence in the interest of truth and therefore defending the new position as firmly as he formerly defended the old. I also prefer WRITTEN argument to ORAL argument; since the former is always more rationally and maturely conceived and is far more dependent on the *real* strength of its case than is the latter. Oral argument

always admits of specious vocal overtones and eleutionary flourishes which influence opponents and hearers irrespective of the genuine merits of the speaker's position. A clever natural debater, in oral combat, takes a thousand advantages and effects a thousand forms of insidious verbal browbeating which brings him success even when his case is an absurdly poor one. It is only on "the morning after" that the supposed beaten opponent sometimes realizes that his own position was right all along, and that the nominal "victor's" success was nothing more than a glib and overawing defence of a fallacy. To me a "victory" of that sort wouldn't be a victory at all—since what I am always seeking in an argument is not *to be adjudged right* but to ascertain (no matter what I may have been thinking) *what is actually so*. . . . I am nearly always in an argument because my refusal to accept ready-made attitudes causes me to differ on one point or another with virtually everyone else. People usually accept opinions in groups—largely as a matter of fashion—so that he who believes one certain thing generally believes a fixed set of other things . . . not because they are really connected, but because through unanalytical inertia they *customarily* go together. Thus a conservative in aesthetic standards is (without reason) expected to be a conservative in theology, while a radical in economics is (equally without reason) expected to be equally radical in every phase of sociology and politics. All this conventional expectation seems very unjustified, unrealistic, and asinine to me. I try to derive my basic standards from Nature and common-sense. . .

Yours in the Black Seal,  
Ech-Pi-El

663. TO MRS. MAYTE E. SUTTON

66 College Street  
Providence, R. I.  
Novr. 2, 1933

Dear Mrs. Sutton:—

Autumn weather has been remarkably genial hereabouts, so that my rural walks have continued right up to the present—& *future*, for that matter, since I plan to take one this afternoon if I can wind up my

duties in time. It is astonishing how many absolutely new byways of unexpected attractiveness one can unearth in one's native region. Only yesterday I traversed the *whole length* of a suburban road whose *ends* I had known half my lifetime, & was rewarded by a series of westward landscape vistas (outspread hills & stone-walled meadows, distant woods, a glint of sunset-litten river, & a steeped village in a northward valley) of surprising & breath-taking beauty. Adding to the almost eerie charm of the scene was a great round Hunter's Moon which climbed above the eastern slopes as soon as the twilight was thick. Tonight ought to afford a roughly comparable spectacle.

I remain

Yours most sincerely,

H. P. Lovecraft

664. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Out on Prospect Terrace,  
slightly north of 66 College St., with  
the spires, domes, and chimney-pots of the  
lower town outspread below me to the west.

November 2-5, 1933

Dear R E H:—

..... Our autumn has been very mild, so that I've had many outdoor trips to compensate for the confinement imposed by my aunt's illness. It has been my habit to take a 'bus out some main road, then alighting and striking across country on foot till I reach another bus-traversed road along which I can return. In this way I have tapped some remarkably wild and unspoiled regions—many of which I never saw before. Despite the east's dense population, a vast amount of open country exists here and there—and the wildness increases rather than decreases as people drift toward the large towns. Some of the stretches I've been seeing are much as they were 200 years ago—with narrow, winding roads bordered by briar-twined stone walls, ancient gambrel-roofed cottages on rocky hills, and sweeping vistas of woods and pastures with here and there a glimpse of shining river or steeped village in the background. Last month I came across a very old house built

by a lineal ancestor of mine—the Thomas Clemence house just west of the city (1654), with massive, pilastered stone chimney, and a perfectly working *well-sweep* in the yard. For the past 2 or 3 evenings I've been enjoying the great round Hunter's Moon that comes up over the rock-ridged eastern hills at sunset. It blends exquisitely with the outspread landscapes of hill and meadow and forest and adds a touch of the weird to a scene already beautiful. But of course this is the very end of the season. No more continuous mild weather can be expected, though there may be isolated days of more or less pleasantness.

... As for my *Festival*—I liked it when I wrote it, but today it seems a bit strained and over-coloured to me. Adjectives and descriptive touches are laid on too thickly—there is a pervasive extravagance about the whole thing. In intimating an alien race I had in mind the survival of some clan of pre-Aryan sorcerers who preserved primitive rites like those of the witch-cult—I had just been reading Miss Murray's *Witch-Cult in Western Europe*. It might be possible to enlarge on this theme—introducing a character descended from the cult stock who did not know of his ancestry till reminded by certain messengers sent to summon him to the tribal rites. As for historical tales—I am not sure how well I could do them. They are certainly fascinating, but they demand a *minute and specialised* knowledge far beyond any acquirements of mine. And further, I have not much of a knack at story writing except where the weird is concerned. It is possible, though, that I may use a Roman setting in certain weird tales—probably some in which a character covers long time-intervals. The thing which I would probably enjoy most in connexion with history would be bringing utterly separate culture-streams into anomalous contact—as in having a Roman washed across the ocean on a derelict galley and landed amidst the Mayas, or having a Greek cross the great deserts to China. ....

I am at a sort of standstill in writing—disgusted at much of my older work, and uncertain as to avenues of improvement. In recent weeks I have done a tremendous amount of experimenting in different styles and perspectives, but have destroyed most of the results. The one tale I have finished—*The Thing on the Doorstep*—is now starting on a circulation round which will include you. You'll get it from Smith, and can forward it to Price. During the summer the Knopf firm broached the idea of issuing a book of my stuff, but it all fell through like the Putnam fiasco of 1931. ....



Three days have elapsed since the start of this epistle—and I must ask pardon for the inferior penmanship beginning during the second sheet. At that place my best pen dropped and suffered injury, so that secondary pens had to be brought into play. None of these substitutes is really satisfactory—hence the visible result. My best pen is promised for tomorrow by the repairer—and I only hope it will be restored to something like its original state. I've told you of my great difficulty in getting a decent pen. This one was given me by a friend who found the flow too free for him—though for me it was just right. If it isn't in good shape tomorrow I'll let the repairer try again—or send for a new point—for a pen like that can't be duplicated!

Regarding our many-phased controversy—I have read your arguments over many times, and with a deep appreciation of their force and cleverness. One thing I especially appreciate about them is their solid sincerity and first-hand derivation from observation and experience. I always respect such arguments infinitely more than I do the lightly-based and often-changed arguments of habitual theorists, whose opinions come largely from unverified reading and waves of academic fashion. It has always been my position that a thinker ought to get at his subject *directly*—applying pure reason at first-hand to the actual facts and phenomena instead of letting his judgment be influenced by prior opinions or conventional fashions. This you do to a gratifying degree, so that—whether or not I can concur with your final deductions—I always find your arguments full of meat and rich in starting-points for various trains of significant thought—a thing I could never say of the glib, ready-made harangues of those who merely echo Croce or Santayana or Briffault or Marx or Russell or Ellis or some other authority. There is a lightweight quality about second-hand opinion which can't be escaped. These fashion-followers forget that the authorities whom they parrot did not derive their original opinions in this easy way. An opinion which is serious with its first-hand creator ceases to be serious when it is mimicked without sufficient basis in experience.

Now as to the question of *resentment*—of course, it is just as irrelevant in one party to an argument as in another. If I seemed to convey a different idea, I surely made a mistake in phraseology. There is no need of *condemning* resentment on either side, unless it actually obscures some point of the case; for its trouble is simply *that it has*

*nothing to do with the actual issue.* It is doubtless natural for an arguer to display a sort of exasperation when his opponent seems to him to be contravening common reason and attacking the foundations of everything which makes life valuable to persons above the simian grade, but this exasperation is simply a side-issue. It has no part in the argument, and neither strengthens nor weakens the case of the man who displays it. *The only thing of importance is the truth or untruth of the various contentions.* Each arguer ought to strive to be as detached and impersonal as possible—acting merely as a collector and channel for objective evidence. And if he can't quite succeed, then the only thing to do is to ignore his *emotion* and study his *evidence* just as though the former did not exist.

Thus if I did express an adverse opinion of any emotion displayed by you, my expression was surely out of order, as you maintain. It is your privilege to ignore my opinion (if such) just as I ought to have passed over your emotion. *Both* are essentially side-issues—waste products cluttering up the one pertinent business at hand . . . i. e., *the search for truth itself, irrespective of its labyrinth of preconceptions and associations.* It really doesn't matter how clumsy I am as an arguer—and I probably am clumsy enough!—provided I can manage to get some real evidence across despite the penumbra of superfluous matter. I am not trying to defend myself—it really interests me relatively little whether I'm a good arguer or not. All I am trying to do is to clear away the cobwebs enshrouding certain basic standards of value in order to get at the truth. I had rather be a poor arguer on the right side than a good arguer on the wrong side—and I'd rather be on the right side even if I have to change former opinions in order to get there, than on the wrong side even though glib rhetoric might make it seem externally the right one. So forget *me*, and any expression of *personal* opinion that I may have made in the past or may make in the future. Heed only the *evidence* that I adduce from sources which reason indicates as reliable. No person can be more than a classifier and transmitter so far as truth is concerned. Truth is truth, irrespective of anybody's affirmation or denial, knowledge or ignorance. If I say that the sun is hot, the vital thing *isn't what I think* of the sun's heat or coldness, but simply the question of whether the sun is hot or cold. I have no part in the matter, except as a possible conveyer and correlator of data. The job of forming a final verdict from the evidence has nothing to do with

me. It's your job alone—a case of your independent mind confronting the mass of available facts. All I can have done will have been to bring forward and arrange some of the facts for your perception and consideration—and it can hardly matter whether I do it gracefully or clumsily so long as you do get the facts and act on them independently. Of course we all have secondary considerations and emotions mixed with the primary issue in arguing, but these are simply to be ignored.

I had hoped that my argument was free from all offence; for certainly, no lack of respect for your position (a position whose sincere first-handedness, as just pointed out, I particularly admire) was at any time intended. While I do consider many of your beliefs at variance with sound standards, there is nothing of disrespect or belittlement in such an opinion, since it is notorious that minds of the highest development are often on the wrong side of a very plain question. The factors determining any individual's belief are complex and innumerable; and in view of the multifarious views held by eminent thinkers on nearly every question under the sun, it can certainly be no affront to tell anybody that his position seems to be utterly wrong. To say to a man "your belief is foolish" is *not in any way* akin to saying "you're a damn fool". Often circumstances are such that a very superior mind may harbour a delusion while a very inferior mind (through the chance circumstance of never having been exposed to the delusion, or through lack of enough imaginative sensitiveness to be deluded) will be absolutely free from it. In such a case a wise man will have a damn foolish opinion while a damn fool will be perfectly correct . . . yet that doesn't make the sage less wise or the fool less foolish. Such is the paradoxical nature of human thought. . . .

Many things of the utmost trashiness or triviality, intellectually or aesthetically considered, may easily give the wisest and most sensitive persons the keenest of pleasure *on other than intellectual or aesthetic grounds*. A grown man loves the trivial nursery tales which remind him of his happy childhood; a musician may love the tawdry barber-shop ballads which he sang in expectant, adventure-dreaming adolescent days with cherished companions now long dead. It is not that the grown man takes the nursery tales seriously, or that the musician thinks "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" real music. It is simply that these crude, unaesthetic things exert an emotional pull all apart from the aesthetic. Now only a total damn fool could claim that

the grown man is literarily stunted because he likes the nursery tale, or that the musician has certain petrified cells because he feels tenderly toward 1905's sentimental yowling. Indeed, I don't see how I could have conveyed the notion that I harbour such an idea! The only thing which would proclaim these people as partly petrified would be the grown man's assertion that the childish tale is a serious expression of life, or the musician's belief that the tin-pan song forms intrinsically a genuine expression of emotion. It does not argue defective taste to be tickled by a jingle of Eddie Guest because it reminds us of something pleasing, although it does argue defective taste to accept such junk as serious emotional expression. In the latter case, serious acceptance requires a defective receiving equipment because the material is so vapid, stale, ill-formed, and unrelated to anything in life or human feeling as intelligently understood, that it could not produce any response at all from a sensitive or well-developed receiving equipment. However, be sure to remember that this has nothing to do with a pleasure or liking unrelated to intrinsic quality. And more—don't forget that even an actual defect of taste in this one field need not argue an all-around inferior or undeveloped personality. Many a man who thinks Guest's crap is poetry has a splendid taste in music or painting, or possesses scientific or executive attainments of the highest order. We are all creatures of various compartments, and how few of us are uniformly developed! All this ought to show you that my attitude has nothing in common with the indiscriminating superciliousness of the self-conscious "intelligentsia". What *they* claim has nothing to do with any opinion of *mine*. I am quite indifferent to the assumption or possession of superiority by *persons*; my only interest being in the honest recognition of basic cultural values and in the moulding of collective national policies to uphold those values. If you saw me at close range you'd realise how utterly antithetical to the personal snob type I am. I never even think of judging *individuals* by any formal standard, and value all sorts of persons (many of the simplest rustic sort) for various reasons. I know the sort of languishing exquisite whom you associate with rigid aesthetic standards, but I can assure you that this type sickens me as thoroughly as it sickens you! What interests me in connexion with the cultural problem is wholly the large question of political, economic, and social organisation. I believe that a civilisation ought to choose those policies which allow its members to develop their natural human



Europeans have done, rather than those which suppress and limit the development of the personality, as was the case in various Oriental and barbaric nations, and as tends to be the case in modern mechanised America with its dominant commercialism and speed and quantity worship. I don't ask any given individual to be other than what he wants to be; but I fight (and rightly, I believe) any general attitude capacities to the utmost, as the Egyptians and Greeks and Western of hostility to the *principle of human civilisation*—the principle which allows at least a certain proportion of the race to realise to the full the natural possibilities which biological development has given them. . .

.....  
 . . . . Nobody is disposed to question the value of a Gothic church's foundation-stones and buttresses, even while pointing to the towers, traceries, rose windows, and finials as the elements of emotional exaltation which caused it to be built. We say that these towers and traceries are "higher" types of expression than the mechanical supports because they are the actual emotional products which formed a reason for the church's building. There would be no need of mechanical supports if there were no higher structure to support. And yet the higher structure could not exist without the supports. All this is recognised—so that when I say a nation ought to bend its policy toward the maintenance of a high standard of aesthetic and intellectual development, *I take it for granted that an equally high standard of order, courage, endurance, etc. must be cultivated*. Without these latter qualities no nation can long be worthy of respect, whatever its mental or artistic height. Do not forget that I take this for granted—that I prominently assert it and always have asserted it. Never for a moment have I considered a civilisation valid unless it has these sturdy qualities *in addition to a high qualitative goal*. That's what I mean by civilisation—a condition of high aim, plus the effective character needed to back that aim up and make it an unconquerable reality. I reiterate this matter somewhat tediously because I fear I have underemphasised it in the past. I have a feeling that you don't realise the great extent to which I respect those sturdy aspects of character which are paramount with you. Where I differ from you is merely that I insist on the harnessing of the sturdy qualities, if possible, to a goal really worthy of them. They are such noble upholding agents, that it is really an insult to them to devote

them to any cause less than the support of a civilisation designed to give human potentialities the highest development and freest play.

Another point to clear up is that of *the real nature of high human development*. Regarding this, let me say that I do not wish to place aesthetic effort on any higher plane than pure intellectual effort. In my opinion, aesthetic and intellectual activities rank about equal. Each class has isolated points in which human capacity seems to reach its height, and I would hesitate to rank one above the other. Thus I think a pure scientist can be fully as exalted a type as a pure artist. Willem de Sitter and A. C. Swinburne differ only in the kind and direction of their development. Great executives and administrators of course rank equally—being scientists in their essential attitude. The greatest military leaders are on the edge of this class, though the relative singleness and simplicity of their problems and their occasional lack of really broad-visioned motivations makes their position less certain. But the point is that I don't attempt to identify the highest development of mankind with art. Art is merely one of several manifestations of the highest stage of development. The development itself is far more generalised and inclusive. Biologically, it is simply an increased complexity and irritability in certain groups of cells. Culturally, it is an awakening of the natural capacities and sensitivities of the human being, so that his combined consciousness and feelings embrace as large a variety of points of contact with the external world as possible. The whole thing is merely an increased differentiation from the inert, automatic, insensitive, and unconscious condition of the lower organisms. A recognition of this principle is, you must admit, widely different from the blind worship of art as "the divine in man" which you so justly ridicule. Let me add that whenever I insist on the practice of "pure art" it is only in contradistinction to an insincere pseudo-art with ulterior motives. I'm not implying that art is any more worthy an object than scientific research, but am simply protesting against the debased practice of whatever one has set out to practice. If the person had chosen some other line of effort and followed it *sincerely*, I wouldn't blame him. And if he were following that other line *insincerely*, I'd blame him as much as if he followed art insincerely. I'm sure you see what I mean.

.....

..... As for political methods—I still think that a fascistic dictatorship, with the dictator elected by vote of those who pass suitable examinations in relevant subjects, would form the least of possible evils. Of course, corruption can never be obviated; but as I pointed out before, the *extent* of its ravages can certainly be *checked* through the tacit acceptance of a given set of political and social standards. For example—years ago, municipal sanitation and relief of poverty were so ill-defined and hazy that no standard of enforcement could be maintained. A corrupt administration could virtually cut off both if it chose. Today this is impossible. Public standards have risen, so that *no city administration, however corrupt, would dare to cut off the water supply, sewer connexions, and vaccination service, or allow relief applicants to starve.* It is understood that such things *must go on.* The cash *must* be raised somehow, so that the administration has to squeeze its graft out of other items exclusively when these departments have been squeezed to a certain fixed minimum. Failure to meet this minimum would result in a political overturn, impeachments, and probable rioting. Well—this same principle will undoubtedly extend to other fields. The public, under the spur of necessity, will evolve a code of necessary employment-spreading, remuneration, unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, and the like; defining and fixing *certain permanent obligations of the government to every individual*—universal, generally understood routine obligations as binding and as widely enforced as the present obligations touching urban sanitation and destitution-relief. With the pressure likely to exist during the next decade, these obligations can probably be made ample enough to ensure every citizen at least a mediocre job or its monetary equivalent. And that solves the *really acute* problem of government. Let the government be as corrupt as it likes—it can't go below this minimum. That is settled. It must fork over just as much, and depend on good management outside this limit to furnish the graft. No matter to what ends a "powerful minority" could bend the government, they couldn't bend it beyond the given pale without arousing an upheaval which would probably unseat them. And there are many reasons why a government elected by a trained and intelligent voting body would be apt to be less crude in the direction of its corruptness than the average government seated by the present haphazard methods. Stratification is of course a natural tendency—for it is perfectly normal for the like-minded people to hang together.

What, indeed, of interest have unlike-minded people to say to one another? But it won't do any harm if it can be kept from becoming too marked in the economic field. It won't make a bit of difference whether or not the government of a nation will come to rest in the hands of a small group, so long as a certain standard of economic distribution is maintained. Let those who will make the laws, so long as those laws ensure civilised standards, and square meals and food and shelter and clothes and warmth for everyone. It is certain, though, that the effect of an enlightened electorate would be to seat a government infinitely more effective than any which could be seated in any other way. There could be no system worse than that in which the voters have no real knowledge of any of the issues. Whatever evils might remain, would be just so much less, and fewer, by reason of the change. With certain objects permanently defined (as suggested above) by public opinion and constitutional enactment, there is absolutely no question but that those objects could be achieved infinitely better and quicker by a government of trained men chosen by trained men, than by a parcel of rhetorically glib and half-educated platitude-mouthers chosen by an emotion-swayed mob of illiterates or foisted on that mob by shrewd and selfish business and financial interests dominated by the profit motive.

.....

You ask why this age is not more fruitful in creative genius, if a settled civilisation tends to promote the flowering of the human spirit. Well—the answer is really threefold. First—this age is one of singular transition, hence is scarcely settled in a psychological sense. The last really settled period—when standards and prospects were definite—was the Victorian age. Everything is uncertain now—standards, beliefs, economics, and even the future of the social order—hence despite material developments there is really a half-barbaric unrest in the air. Second—an unusually large share of contemporary brains has gone into science instead of aesthetics. This really is a remarkably active period in scientific history—many different branches of knowledge having been almost revolutionised since 1900, and our whole perspective on the structure of space and the workings of our own minds having been spectacularly altered. Third—the need of readjusting aesthetics to bring art and literature into touch with our wholly new concepts of life and human motives has forced the last 20 years to be gropingly experimental rather than confidently constructive. It is almost superfluous to



point out that our whole sense of values and our whole feeling of relationship to the universe has altered utterly since the decline of genuine belief in religion, so that many of the emotional appeals of former times are no longer effective or significant. And what is more, modern psychology has completely changed our attitude toward our own motives, revealing to us the utter falsity of many of our old assumptions regarding the nature of human feelings and the basic reasons behind various manifestations of human conduct. We can no longer write of emotions and motives in the old way, as simple conscious things; for we now realise their utter complexity and their dependence upon hidden, unconscious factors. All our human valuations have been subtly changed, so that art founded on the old assumptions would seem childish and comic. This means that artists must for a long while do very little more than feel around in the dark for fresh approaches to the task of expression. They must find out through trial and error what sort of expression can reach our genuine emotions and ring true in the light of what we now know about ourselves and about the cosmos. And that is exactly what most of the younger artists are doing. Naturally, their experimental results can hardly be of value as yet. Meanwhile the pallid echoes of older artists working in the dying tradition seem faint and unconvincing because the world of thoughts and feelings which bred that tradition has passed away. Certainly, this is a trying and unsatisfying age to live in!

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—  
H P L

665. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Novr. 8, 1933

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

..... As for his (Kopp-Davis) criticism of my allusion to Jewish newspaper control in New York—he missed the whole point. I didn't say that Jews own all the papers, but merely that they *control* their policies through economic channels. The one great

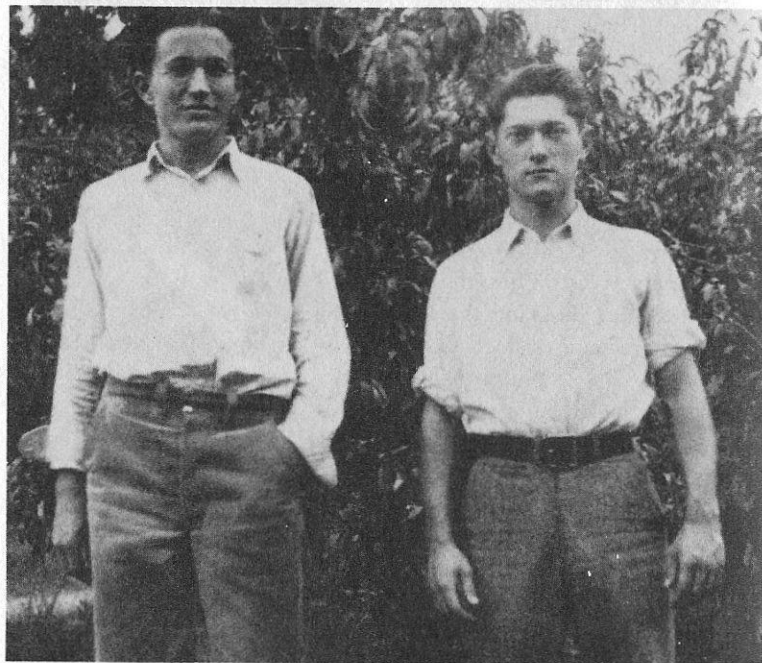
lever, of course, is *advertising*. Virtually *all* the great department stores of New York (except Wanamaker's) are solidly Jewish even when they deceptively retain the names of earlier Aryan owners; & a clear majority of the large shops of other sorts are, as well. These Semitic merchants are clannish & touchy to the very limit, & will arrange to withdraw all their advertising at once whenever a newspaper displeases them. And, as Mencken has pointed out, their grounds of displeasure are limitless. They even resent the frequent use of the word "Jew" in the news, so that papers speak of "East Side agitators", "Bronx merchants", "Russian immigrants" &c. Let any N. Y. paper try to refer to these people in the frank, impartial, objective way a Providence or Pittsburgh or Richmond paper would, & the whole pack of synagogue-hounds is after it—calling down the vengeance of heaven, withdrawing advertising, & cancelling subscriptions—the latter a big item in a town where  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the population is Semitic in origin & feelings. The result is, that not a paper in New York dares to call its soul its own in dealing with the Jews & with social & political questions affecting them. The whole press is absolutely enslaved in that direction, so that on the whole length & breadth of the city *it is impossible to secure any public American utterance—any frank expression of the typical mind & opinions of the actual American people—on a fairly wide & potentially important range of topics*. Only by reading the outside press & the national magazines can New Yorkers get any idea of how *Americans* feel regarding such things as Nazism, the Palestine question (in which, by every decent standard, the Arabs are dead right & both England & the Jews intolerably wrong), the American immigration policy, & so on. *This* is what I mean by Jewish control, & I'm damned if it doesn't make me see red—in a city which was once a part of the real American fabric, & which still exerts a disproportionately large influence on that fabric through its psychologically impressive size & its dominance both in finance & in various opinion-forming channels (drama, publishing, criticism &c.). Gawd knows I have no wish to injure any race under the sun, but I *do* think that something ought to be done to free American expression from the control of *any* element which seeks to curtail it, distort it, or remodel it in any direction other than its natural course. As a matter of fact, I don't blame the Jews at all. Hell, what can we expect after letting them in & telling them they can do as they please? It is perfectly natural for them to make everything as favourable for

themselves as they can, & to feel as they do. The Italians & French-Canadians in Rhode Island try the same thing (with less success, though the Dagoes are making alarming gains in Providence, where they must form nearly half the population despite their deceptive isolation in one vast quarter), & I blame them just as little. I criticise not Mr. Bernard Kopp-Davis—nor Sig. Giambattista Scagnamiglio nor M. Napoleon-Francois Laliberté—but merely the *condition* brought about by a *reductio ad absurdum* of the flabby idealism of the “melting-pot” fallacy. Within the lifetime of people now middle-aged, the general tone of our northern cities has so changed that they no longer seem like home to their own inhabitants. Providence is something of an exception because of the continued pure-Yankeedom of the residence section atop the hill—but the downtown business section shews all the stigmata of Latin mongrelisation . . . Italian & Portuguese faces everywhere. One has to get down to Richmond to find a town which really *feels like home*—where the average person one meets looks like one, has the same type of feelings & recollections, & reacts approximately the same to the same stimuli. The loss of a collective life—of a sharing of common traditions & memories & experiences—is the curse of the heterogeneous northeast today. There is no real solution—& all the American can do is to forget about the foreigners as much as he can, be on guard against alienation from his own tradition (apart from which he is lost & deprived of that normal adjustment to a coherent fabric & continuous historic stream which is everyone’s right), & do his part toward cutting off further unassimilable immigration. I’d hardly advocate Nazi tactics, but I certainly would welcome a greater assertiveness & independence among the native stock. I think the (probable) 100,000 Yankees in Providence ought to be able to say what they choose about Italy without making apologies to Federal Hill (our local Nuova Napoli), & that the (perhaps) 1,000,000 Americans in New York ought to be able to discuss Hitler & Palestine & pork chops without glancing fearfully over their shoulders at a horde of fortune-seeking Yiddish newcomers. I have to hand it to the French-Canadians for putting up a fight for their language & institutions. While naturally I oppose their cultural encroachments outside their own Quebec province—their fights to make all Canada bi-lingual, & all that—I admire them down to the bottom line—as Gen. Murray & Sir Guy Carleton did at the very outset—for their staunch resolution to keep up the fabric of their forefathers. They



Wilfred Blanch Talman





Duane Rimel and F. Lee Baldwin

were on the ground first, & by the time we licked them in 1759-60 their land was normally a French one—a spacious area with a thoroughly adjusted population, cultivated French towns, & a century & a half of local traditions. Clearly, they had every aesthetic right to demand the perpetuation of their own folkways instead of ours—yet how few have shewn any real guts in similar situations! Where is the spoken French of Louisiana, the spoken Dutch of New-Netherland, or the spoken Spanish of Texas, today? But the Canucks, by god, *did* have the guts! They kept an unbroken front, used every dignified influence in Parliament, & finally secured the passage of the Quebec Act of 1774, securing them an inviolate perpetuation of their laws, language, & religion. We respected their rights as the Romans respected the rights of the conquered Greeks—and today Quebec is still the cultivated French city it was in 1750 . . . . just as Athens & Alexandria were still cultivated Greek cities after centuries of Roman rule. Of course, there are troublesome connotations. When the French overflow into other regions like Ontario & New England they carry their solidarity & unassimilability with them, remaining aloof & cohesive, & refusing to adopt the English speech they have so long fought on their own soil. They cannot understand why the tolerance & protection of French in Quebec Province cannot be duplicated in places only a few hours' ride from Quebec—like Vermont or Ontario or Rhode Island. In this state they have overrun certain cities & villages & made them just as French as anything in Quebec or Normandy. When I first visited Quebec in 1930 I saw nothing I had not known all my life from travels in my own state. Here, as there, one can strike towns dominated by ornate French steeples; containing statues *Erice par Société Jacques-Cartier*; sporting shop signs such as *Elphege Carou*, *Epicier*, or *Hormisdas Bilodeau, Cardonnier*; having *Maison à vendre*, *Chambres à louer* & *Salle à louer* window cards; displaying Gallic posters of some such cinema as *Sous la Lune du Maroc*; *adapté de la Nouvelle par André Reuze*, *Les Cinq Gentlemen Mandite* at Le Théâtre Laurier; & harbouring crowds of black-clad parochial school children led by hooded nuns or shovel-hatted curés & jabbering in the French of their forefathers . . . . all the hereditary things of France undiluted by transplantation & expansion. These Rhode Island French fight like hell whenever any attempt is made to deracinate them or to substitute English for French in their parochial schools. In other local foreign colonies one sees a gradual

Americanisation—a younger generation speaking English, & a falling off of ancestral ways—but nothing of that pervades these French centres. The French newspapers continue to flourish, & every parent strives to keep his children true to *La Tradition*. It is really ironic to reflect that—despite all the *utterly alien* blood which has been dumped on New England—the *one really persistent* foreign challenge should come from none other than our *oldest* & most historic rival—the Frenchman of the North against whose menace old Cotton Mather thundered his Catonian invectives from Boston pulpits in the 1680's. Did Wolfe fall in vain? Today, just as old Cotton feared, the spires & syllables of France rise thickly from the banks of New England's rivers! But much as I hate any foreign influence, I'm damned if I don't admire those tough little frog-eaters for their unbreakable tenacity! You can't make a dent in them! . . . . . They'll probably still be French, albeit on alien soil, years after we are hopelessly Italianated or Portuguesed or Yiddified or Polacked in our own back yards! If they'd only lend us a little of their guts, I wouldn't begrudge them the New England towns they've overrun! Shake, Pierre mon frère! You may be a rival, but you're nobody's football! . . . . .

As for my recent fictional experimentation & its nature—it primarily concerns the type of perspective, atmosphere, & language to use in capturing & crystallising the moods forming the subject-matter. I am trying to see which of several possible types of handling best fits certain conceptions—what tales ought to start abruptly on a note of feverish tension, when a semi-poetic style ought to be employed, how intricate explanations are best camouflaged when they are necessary to a story, what subjects demand an utterly bizarre angle of approach, what the length of a given type of tale ought to be, & how the various modulations ought to be proportioned, &c. &c. &c. So far I have torn up everything that I have written, & I may decide that further writing is impossible. Meanwhile (my hatred of the typewriter being stronger every day) I have had a delinquent client type the story I wrote last August, & have started the carbon on the rounds of the gang—beginning with Dwyer. If I get 2 or 3 bad reactions on it, I shall withdraw it from circulation. If not, you will receive it in the course of time—from Bloch, with a request to pass on to Barlow. I don't think much of the thing. Regarding essays—I never write well to order or except when something calls forth spontaneous comment. I haven't activities or ex-

periences enough to evoke a series of ramblings like McIntyre's—nor have I the observation & skill to spin endless images from commonplace things.

Regarding pacificism, though—I really don't see how any sober adult can hold such an attitude. Of course it is foolish to *exalt* war in this age; although in the past, when less destructive, it certainly did strengthen character & national fibre. Today we admit its net adverse effect—its cataclysmic destructiveness & bad evolutionary legacy—so that all are anxious to reduce its recurrence to an absolute minimum. But this does not alter the fact that at certain times we have to fight in order to preserve an environment fit for ourselves & our descendants to live in. While we can control *our own* armaments & military policy, we have no means of controlling those of *other nations* & races, many of which have ambitions whose fulfilment demands the subordination & humiliation of ourselves. Pacificism on our part can never mean any more than the deliberate *weakening of ourselves whilst other nations remain strong*; so that sooner or later some rival group will be able to take from us whatever it wishes, leaving us in a crippled, demoralised, broken condition & finally engulfing us in its own political fabric. If there are enough madmen & cowards in this country to refuse to fight Japan when the attack comes, then those very madmen & cowards—or their sons—may some day find themselves Japanese subjects drafted into the Mikado's army & forced to fight China or Soviet Russia on Japan's behalf . . . . . with the alternative of being executed or imprisoned. It may or may not give these fanatics & swine & jellyfish pride to see the psychology of America become that of a crushed, cringing subject-nation—to see Anglo-Saxon culture debased & effeminised & tainted with Japanese elements, or perhaps confined to a huddled group of whipped dogs kicked from pillar to post around the world under alien governments. These shrinking "reformers" may enjoy the sight of a supine, lethargic, defeated America like China (a typical pacifist nation)—sprawling open to the plundering of other nations & finally suffering partitioning among them. They may like to think of themselves as the whipped Greeks of the Roman imperial age—enslaved & despised, & the butt of the normal nations which may perhaps give them a contemptuous refuge. They may like to think of themselves as herded on reservations like the defeated Indians, or crushed with unjust restrictions & demands for outrageous indemnities like the Germans



of today. They may regard all these inevitable results of supine pacificism with pride & pleasure—and I can only add that such a fate is just about what they deserve. But, thank heaven, there are a few *men* in America still; so that when Japan does strike, she will meet more than a welcoming committee of college-boy sopranos with wreaths of white roses! And I fancy that a good many of those men will be chaps of basic good sense who passed through & outgrew the pacifistic phase in their adolescent period. They will probably fight all the more bravely to atone for the irresponsible sentimentalism into which a wave of decadent fashion once temporarily swept them. Not that they will be militarists, or seek any move which can be avoided through self-respecting negotiations. They will simply have too much spirit & decency to allow the race & institutions which they represent, & of which they form an inextricable part, to be whipped & enslaved & placed in a position of intolerable ignominy & ultimate disintegration. It isn't in Anglo-Saxons to accept the kicked-around squalor & brokenness of ghetto Jews, or the paralytic lethargy of the defenceless, opium-soaked Chinese, without such a fight as the world never saw before. We belong to the Aryan culture stream which has Thermopylae & Horatius & Camillus & the Metaurus & Chalons & Tours & Lepanto & Sir Richard Grenville—not Egyptian & Babylonish captivities & Seleucid persecutions & Roman destruction & dispersal, or Tartan & Manchu conquests, foreign concessions & treaty-pacts, & Japanese land-grabbings—in its traditions. When we cannot live free & unbroken, we shall not live at all. A foeman's bullet is sweeter than a master's whip. Regarding the late world war—I would certainly have regarded any Anglo-Saxon as delinquent if he had not put himself at the disposal of his nation to the fullest extent of his physical capacity. There is nothing "vindictive" in a determination not to see one's own group placed at a disadvantage & started on the road to decline & disintegration. The consequences of a German victory in the late war would have been almost fatally bad for us—just as our victory has come near being fatally bad for the Germans. If *we* rubbed it into *them*, just imagine how *they*, as victors, would have rubbed it into *us*! Anyone realising the German spirit of 1914 can understand what a fatal blow to Anglo-Saxon civilisation a German victory would have formed. It would have been the first step toward a gradual undermining, with German influences reaching in at every crack for power & advantage. France would have been a sphere

of German influence, & sooner or later the spread of German colonisation in South America would have created New-World problems. History shews what the psychology of the cringing subject-nations becomes when some one virile power gains world-ascendancy . . . & no self-respecting man of English blood would see London & Boston become an Antonine-period Athens & Alexandria while a drop of blood or an unbroken bone remained in his body. Remember that no suave pacificism of *ours* would have lessened *Germany's* zeal for conquest a single whit. If we had been supine in the past, the chances are that we'd have been gobbled up long before the present war—by a Napoleonic France if not by a Bismarckian Prussia. Of course there was a great deal of inept diplomacy leading up to the war. Very conceivably, moderation & intelligence might have postponed or modified this particular conflict. But when moderation & intelligence lapse or fail, as they are bound to do sooner or later, there is nothing to do but defend oneself & see that one's own group does not come out disadvantageously. It is only this determination not to be crushed or enslaved that keeps any civilisation alive & healthy. That is why a defence of the unbroken, self-respecting Aryan attitude is not mere empty heroics, as our half-baked modern "intelligentsia" pretend to insist. The fact simply is, that this dogged defensive attitude happens to be the corner-stone of racial & national integrity. When a group ceases to produce a majority of men who naturally feel that way, it is on the road toward victimisation, subordination, plundering, imposition, draining, humiliation, enslavement, & final disintegration at the hands of others. Look at the races & nations of the past which have lacked the fighting spirit (& by that I mean defensive zeal, not the desire to go out & annex land & break people's heads)—where are they today? What happened to the Romans when they mixed their blood with the scum of decadent immigration & lost their racial stamina? What happened to the Vandals after they settled down in Roman North Africa & took on the effeminacy of the region? Good god—why need one catalogue the self-evident? The facts are plain. I'm no bigot. I wouldn't blame a man today if he failed to enlist—or to try to enlist—for a war aimed at the conquest of Cuba or another theft from Mexico or something like that. That kind of thing does not involve the integrity or survival of the group. Also—I'd gladly forgive anyone who stayed out of an *aggressive* war—say on Japan over the conquest of Manchuria, with economic reasons

masked as idealistic crusading—*unless some turn in the fortunes of that war put America on the defensive*. Then, of course, it would be every man's duty to see that his group did not go under—the pragmatic emergency dwarfing all theoretical or moralistic aspects of the war's beginning. When a nation is in real peril, the only decent thing for any of its citizens to do is to defend it to the limit, with not a thought for anything but that dogged defence. Thus it is—one may have some excuse for opposing a needless war . . . indeed, it is a civic duty to oppose needless wars until some ill-fortune actually precipitates them . . . . . *but there is no excuse for not doing all one can when actual peril & humiliation confront the group*. Remember that refusing to do one's duty in a war *doesn't stop the war in the least*. It only stops *one's own side* of the war, so that the *other* nation can destroy & enslave more readily. This is true in an ultimate & indirect sense even when not directly obvious. If America had not entered the world war Germany would have won, & in so doing would have imposed ruinous consequences upon the greater part of that world which is closest akin to America. There would have arisen an irresistibly powerful Germany with policies basically antagonistic to any potential rival, & aggressions from this new & swollen world-empire could only have been a matter of time. Eventually, a war between America & victorious Germany would have been inevitable, & in this war there would be only cowed & defeated nations for allies. American defeat & disaster would have been very probable, & in any case the war would have been infinitely more sanguinary for the nation than it was at the time which America chose for the showdown. The war being once started & having developed as it did, America was wise in intervening. However—remember that the question of national defence can't be decided from any one war. Even if the late world war weren't a suitable illustration of the need for defensive readiness, there are plenty of known wars in the past & plenty of likely wars in the future which *certainly are* most emphatic & irrefutable illustrations. Would you have had Aëtius offer the people of Europe to Attila, or had Charles Martel welcome an engulfment by Islam's conquering horde? Or perhaps you think that a pacifistic Aëtius could have *persuaded* the good, kind Huns to go away, or that a Quaker policy among the Franks would have stemmed the resistless Saracen tide which had left nothing behind it in North Africa & Spain! Actually, I think your attitude will change with added

years & maturer reflection. It may indeed be that you will oppose many wars which others will favour, but I cannot think that you will continue in a pacificism which seems (rightly or wrongly—I may have failed to get all sides of your attitude) to be of an unthinking, purely emotional, & all-inclusive sort. Let me add that I do not minimise the destructive seriousness of warfare. It would not surprise me if some wholesale conflict with modern weapons were to play a decisive part in ending western civilisation. But what, alas, can the attacked nation do about it? Is it not better to go down into the twilight as men, unconquered still when all the familiar world dissolves to a flux, than to crawl as slaves of an alien conqueror a few years more till in the end some other war stamps out the feebly flickering spark? To this it seems to me an Aryan can have but one answer.

..... So you never heard of a "dropped egg" before! I think it will spread to New York soon; because the large Waldorf Lunch chain of New England has invaded the metropolis, & this chain has uniform printed placards for walls & windows. It isn't likely that they'll print a variant set of cards of the N. Y. units, hence from now on the Gothamites will daily confront the name in various connexions

CORNED BEEF HASH  
WITH DROPPED EGG

20¢

DROPPED EGG  
ON TOAST

10¢

HAM OR BACON SPECIAL  
WITH DROPPED EGG

15¢

which will soon let them know what it's all about. ....

I guess that Cincinnati editor was right in saying that newspaper work is not a very good preparation for a novel-writer. There are two sides to the question—for of course reporting gives one an insight into all sorts of departments of life—but in the long run I fancy that the newspaper's devotion to speed, brevity, & surface clearness, & its in-



culcation of an extremely bad style, form such drawbacks that the advantages are more than offset. The press directly discourages the minute, leisurely development, careful choice of significant detail, full presentation of nuances, sharp analysis of motives & emotions, impartial treatment of values, & rhythmical grace of style, which distinguish serious novel-writing from mere capable journalism. The atmosphere of newspaperdom, so far as I can judge, is one distinctly hostile to cultivated & sensitive personalities—and it likewise requires a sort of brassy pushingness which men of artistic potentialities are not likely to possess.

..... Thanks tremendously for the two issues of *Story*, which safely arrived, & which I have read through with vast interest—my first intensive glimpse of contemporary fiction in a long while. There is certainly some solid material in these things, even though they may represent a slight overdoing of the current tendency toward confining the short story to narrow minutiae of character analysis & mood-delineation. It would be impossible to exaggerate the gulf which separates these sincere efforts from the suavely lifeless mechanical hokem which clutters up the purely commercial magazines. Your choice of tales seems to me pretty sensible, & I don't believe we could work up a controversy about any major point. As for *Rupture*—of which you say you may have missed the point—my guess is that if you did miss it, it was because the formula is *excessively simple* ..... a very timeworn type which one wouldn't expect to see in a magazine as modern & presumably sophisticated as *Story*. This tale—unless I've missed something vital, is simply a slightly dressed-up version of the old sure-fire formula of the big blustering bozo who gets a jolt & comes out at the little end of the horn while his despised, insignificant-looking butt comes out ahead of everybody else. The formula owes its undying popularity, of course, to that sense of inferiority in the average person which causes him to identify himself with the underdog & exult in the lightning reversal which gives the underdog a surprising triumph. Here we have the fullest use of the formula. One moment—big Red-Head on the top of the heap. Tough guy, expecting to get into the CCC on a walk & lord it over the others—especially damned wizened foreign shrimps like this modest, timid, quiet little frog-eater Francois Le Grange. Then—all of a sudden—big bozo kicked out as physically unsound, & despised little French-Canuck turns out to be a nail-hard

veteran of the logging camps who not only gets by physically with flying colours but even gets a corporal's berth with authority over others! Complete turn of the tables—the mighty laid low & the humble exalted! Old stuff—but always good for a loud hand from the gallery! *Death & Transfiguration* interested me in its depiction of a New England scene & speech utterly unfamiliar to me despite my close knowledge of the neighbouring town of Portsmouth, N. H. These run-down "shanty-town" nuclei correspond to the decaying backwaters of the Catskills & some of the "poor white" belts of the South, but very little is known of them. I never saw such a district, although I understand there is one called *Scalloptown* down the west shore of Narragansett Bay near East Greenwich, about 16 miles from Providence. What astonishes me in this story is the *dialect*—which resembles nothing I ever heard in my life. It sounds theatrical & literary—like some old-world picture by Hardy or Synge or Yeats—and I can't seem to make it fit into old New England.

Yr most obt hble Servt  
E'ch-Pi-El

666. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Pit of Yub.  
Hour of the Squirmer's Emergence  
from the Walls.  
Nov. 13, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:

Had an ineffably menacing dream last night which I wish I could weave into a story. About a new circle of friends on which I stumbled—and which turned out to be a coven of hellish daemonolaters. They lived in an ineffably ancient hill street I had never seen before, and all their houses seemed to have bizarre features. Finally, when I called on one of them at an odd hour, I stumbled on something which causes me to flee in horror!

Yrs. for the Litany of the Under Pits  
—E'ch-Pi-El

667. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Novr. 14, 1933.

Dear Fra Ricardus:—

You were fortunate, too, in getting a glimpse of New England's autumnal countryside. There is absolutely nothing like it for sheer beauty and a kind of unplaceable magic linked with all sorts of nebulous associations in time and space; and I never tire of wandering half-aimlessly through its remoter byways, absorbing its massed impression, its occasional gorgeous details, and the unexpected vistas of wholly breath-taking magnificence which always come now and then even in one's familiar native region. . . . Around the All-Hallows period I unearthed a highly picturesque district on the city's very rim—Fruit Hill, from one point of which I caught a view of almost incredible loveliness which included a twilight-clad descent of walled meadows (with a wood and glimpses of a sunset-litten river at the bottom), dim violet hills against an orange-gold west, a steepled village in a northward valley, and over the rocky eastward ridge a great round Hunter's Moon preparing to flood the scene with spectral light. Since then there has been some cold weather—even a premature touch of snow—but yesterday was warm again, and I took a walk through the same Fruit Hill region, now pretty well toned down to bare boughs and grey and brown effects. My season of hibernation looms close—but in my present ancient hilltop quarters I do not mind an indoor existence as badly as I might. The view from where I sit at my desk is an especially appealing one to me—old roofs and branches in the foreground, a Georgian belfry and two old church towers in the middle distance, and beyond all the rest a strip of far-off purple horizon with a mystical hilltop steeple faintly visible against the sunset. It arouses the imagination—and will keep my mind off my work if I don't look out!

Yr. obt. Hble. Servt.,  
HPL

668. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Nov. 14, 1933.

Dear Wright:—

Yrs. duly received—and I sent the *Silver Key* sequel back under separate cover yesterday. Sultan Malik possibly over-states the matter in assigning me almost full authorship of the thing. The *language* is mine, but the whole system of mathematical concepts in the central portion is his. That kind of background is quite alien to me—indeed, while the Peacock Sultan is primarily *intellectual* in his methods and appeal, I am basically non-intellectual or even anti-intellectual. My attempts represent a striving for emotional emancipation from rigidities and certainties—a reaching toward vague suggestions of liberation and adventurous expectancy on far horizons, and a struggle to crystallise certain moods too ethereal and indefinite for description. The original *Silver Key* is characteristically mine (although it has naive aspects which I would not duplicate today), but the present sequel is something I would never have thought of creating alone. Therefore don't be misled by M. de Marigny's modesty into fancying that the dual authorship is merely nominal!

.....

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—  
H. P. L.

669. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Wood of the Gangrenous Fungi.  
Hour of the Monstrous Multiplication.  
Nov. 18, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I think I mentioned my pleasure at re-reading *Azédarac* in print—which reminds me, did I make a certain historical criticism when I read



the manuscript a year or so ago? I meant to, but may have become side-tracked. The thing is, that I'm in doubt about the picture of Roman Gaul in A. D. 475 . . . . especially the idea conjured up by the phrase "an obsolete variant of the French of Averroigne". I assume you realise that in 475 no such language as *French* existed, the vulgar Latin of Gallic not being sufficiently differentiated from the parent stock to be any sort of separate speech. . . . By no stretch of the imagination could the popular Latin of 475 be called "old French". The Frankish tribes in Gaul (entering about 350 A. D. and being nominal allies of Rome) still spoke their German dialect and mixed not at all with the Gauls—Romans. Ditto for the Visigoths and Burgundians who entered in 406. Only a handful of remote backwoodsmen could have adhered to the primal Celtic speech of pre-Roman days. The name *Averroigne* would undoubtedly have had a pure Latin form *Averonia* or (if derived from a tribe of *Averones*, as the name of *Auvergne* was derived from the *Auvercu*) *Regio Averonum*. Another thing—I suppose you know that Druidism was not the dominant religion which Christianity displaced, but that it had been a proscribed, fugitive faith (like Judaism in Renaissance Spain) since the edict of Claudius in A. D. 43. Augustus had disfranchised all Druids, and under and after Claudius Druidic worship became a capital crime. When Christianity spread into Gaul it was not Druidism but the regular religion of the Roman Empire—Jove and his congeners—which it displaced. However—I realise that Druidism was always kept alive secretly in the woodland fastnesses of Lugdunensis Tertia (Brittany) and Aquitania Prima (Auvergne . . . . = Averroigne?), probably lasting till after Charlemagne's time.

.....  
I wish some day you would write a tale of somebody who lived down the ages and saw the little details of familiar life crumble around him whilst alien powers and unfamiliar ways engulfed his land and left him an exile from an earlier and forgotten world.\*\* ...

.....  
But what you say of *new senses* is certainly worthy of profound reflection. Certainly, our view of nature is purely a subjective and fragmentary one, depending on the meagre sensory equipment called forth

\*\* This suggestion is very probably the genesis for Smith's *The Chain of Aforgomon*, published in the December, 1935 issue of *Weird Tales*.

by an evolution whose only object is physical survival, not knowledge and perception. That is, the only links we have with the external world are special faculties designed for a very (intellectually) narrow end and having no reference to the process of envisaging or experiencing the cosmos in its totality, or even of forming an approximately full idea of the small section within our conceivable grasp. While nothing in our normal experience is ever likely to call forth any additional senses, it is not impossible that experiments with the ductless glands might open up a fresh sensitivity or two—and then what impressions might not pour in? I doubt, though, if anything new concerning the *sources of thought* would be discovered; since the local cerebral origin of this process, and its unmistakable connexion with simpler forms of nervous excitability down to the crude sensitiveness of the amoebal cell-wall, are so apparent in the light of careful, disinterested research. However, a vast deal might be learnt concerning the *mechanism and operation* of thought—just what modifications of tissue are involved, what transformations of energy occur, whether any wave-motion (rendering telepathy—which is probably an unfounded legend—possible) exists in addition to molecular changes, and whether such a thing as hereditary memory can exist. This last is gorgeous fictional material—as Cline's *Dark Chamber* attests. ....

Yrs. for the Infra-Red Western Dawn—  
E'ch-Pi-El

670. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Novr. 21, 1933

Crown of CONSOBRINAL Clarification:—

.....  
A bit of good luck in yesterday's mail—Wright has finally accepted the joint tale by Price and me that he turned down a coupla months ago. One hundred forty bucks. How Sultan Malik and I will split it (if we ever get it) remains to be seen.

Yr. obt. Cousin—  
Θεοβάλδος Πέρκινς

671. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Nov. 21, 1933.

My dear Wright:—

I am indeed glad that the collaboration has finally proved acceptable, and hope that no epistolary alarms of outraged illiterati may cause you to regret the decision. For my part, as I have often said, I think that a restriction of contributions to the sort of thing the densest clods like would alienate nearly as many readers as an all-literate policy would. I know surely a dozen or more followers of the magazine who would certainly not continue to follow it if its contents uniformly represented the lifeless, mechanical, stock-figure, diagrammed type of hack-work so dearly beloved by the *Eyrie*-bombarding proletariat—and that dozen can scarcely be altogether unrepresentative. The trouble is, that the readers who do the most letter-writing—in an eagerness to publicise themselves—tend to reflect a stratum of taste distinctly lower than that of the best (and by no means negligible) part of the magazine's clientele. There seems to me little doubt but that *Weird Tales* is bought and read by large numbers of persons infinitely above the pulp-hound level—persons who relish Machen and Blackwood and MR James, and who would welcome a periodical of the Machen-Blackwood-James degree of maturity and fastidiousness if such were published. Naturally, they tolerate the hack stuff merely for the sake of the occasional real stories—Clericashtoniana, Howardiana, Caneviniana, etc.—which accompany it, and would certainly drop off if not assured of at least a fair supply.

.....

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—  
H. P. L.

672. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

Novr. 27, 1933

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

As to a good age to be born into—I have my doubts about the future, since in my opinion the existing civilisation has passed its peak & is sliding into a slow downward course like that of Rome in the late Antonine period. My view is pretty well upheld by Spengler in his monumental *Decline of the West*. War & graft will never cease, since they are merely the working-out of permanent & ineradicable human instincts. Of course, ingenuity & common sense may find ways to reduce the number of major armed clashes, & to check up more closely on political thieving—but the old instincts are still at work, & will use just as much cleverness on their side as can ever be used against them. Every individual & group is and always will be out for everything it can possibly get in any possible way. It is all very well to "outlaw" war—but it will inevitably crop out sooner or later, whether we call it "war" or not. Whenever a group wants a certain thing badly enough, & can not get it through peaceful channels, it will snatch at it by force the first moment it feels able to defeat whatever combination of forces can be brought against it. And too—whenever any loophole for civic theft exists, there will always be plenty of officials to take advantage of it. "Progress" is an illusion. The most civilised period of the world's history was probably the age of Pericles in Athens—around B. C. 450. However—mechanical science, as distinguished from real depth of thought, will certainly advance considerably before the next dark age & fresh start. "Space ships" of the traditional scientific sort are perhaps a little beyond probability (the obstacles to their operation being really much greater than popular science indicates), but I certainly think that some of rocket voyage to the *moon* (whose extreme nearness puts it in a separate category) will be attempted—first with an untenanted projectile, & later perhaps with a human cargo. Whether any living being could survive such a voyage & return is another matter. Probably all current—and future—ideas of other celestial bodies are wholly wrong . . . especially the popular ideas of cheap science fiction. In the



first place, the number of bodies inhabited by highly evolved organic beings at any one period of the cosmos is probably very small. It takes what amounts to a rare *accident* to produce a solar system, & still *another* rare accident, to produce the stream of biological modifications culminating (so far) on this planet as mankind. It is unlikely that any other planet of this system could have complexly evolved denizens—& other similar systems (if there are any) we can never know. Moreover—the results of complex evolution on other spheres would undoubtedly differ far more from anything we recognise as life than do any of the "Hul Jok" or "Karns Kans" of the indefatigable & repetitious Mr. Edmond Hamilton. There is also the possibility that life is merely a temporary attribute of this one region & period—the complex structure of matter in other sections of space & time being totally alien to the anabolistic-katabolistic cell-pattern which we locally observe & embody. The more we learn of the cosmos, the more bewildering does it appear. Betwixt Einstein & de Sitter (a lecture by whom I've attended) we now have to envisage a cosmos constantly expanding with no future limit in sight—a case of utter waste & dispersal. At this rate it could not have existed more than 5 billion years in the past—& it's anybody's guess what started it & what existed before it. Probably there is some cyclic expansion & contraction, dispersal & re-combination, in the eternal vortex of force-units.

Yrs most sincerely,  
H.P. Lovecraft

673. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Crest of Unknown Kadath in the Cold Waste,  
Whence is seen the Insufferable Perspective.  
Hour of the Monstrous Looming from the  
Unplaceable Direction.

Nov. 29, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

..... Classical legend is full of fruitful themes—I have for years been thinking of basing a tale on the celebrated *Oracle of Trophonius*—that yawning cave whose nighted revelations were such

that none who had received them ever smiled again. Another thing I hope to see is that just-commenced tale of the cloudy gods.

Speaking of dreams\*\*—I think my average of fantastic specimens is now slowly rising after a long minimum. Last week I had a very vivid dream of forming the acquaintance of a group of quiet, well-bred, and apparently wholesome young men, all of whom lived in quasi-bohemian apartments in ancient houses along a hill street in Providence which I had never before discovered (and which doesn't exist except as a wide variant of certain far less ancient streets in the Federal Hill Italian quarter). During the course of the long dream I called on several of these young men, whose point of interest was their knowledge of ancient and mediaeval magic. They were all very finical in one respect—that I call only at appointed times. On one occasion, when I had expressed scepticism about the reality of magic to a group of about three or four of them, they expressed a credulousness almost akin to Lumley's or Summers's—and insisted on giving me a *mild* demonstration of certain things *beyond physics and chemistry*. This they insisted on doing at my home (in the dream, 598 Angell St.)—whither they all trooped (there must have been twelve or thirteen of them) one late evening. My mother (then living) had retired, but I admitted them to my room and brought chairs from other rooms so that they might sit in a semicircle. Only then, when they were all together, did I begin to feel anything sinister about them—but under my Welsbach gas-light they seemed too pallid and waxen to be made of flesh—and *they looked too much alike*. Such a resemblance would not have been sinister in twins—but in 12 or 13 men (each about 30) it aroused a vague disquiet. They were in dinner jackets, and looked something like the vampires on the cover of that last *Strange Tales* containing Cave's *Murgunstrumm* and your *Second Interment*. They did not lower the light, but suddenly commenced to *sing* in a strange minor key—with tonal intervals not belonging to any terrestrial musical system. All at once I grew dizzy, and began to feel as if the room were whirling in an unknown dimension. Then, although the outlines of the walls remained

\*\* Of the two dreams recounted on the following pages, the first was treated subsequently by August Derleth in a novelette, *The Dark Brotherhood*, while the second dream suggests an influence on Clark Ashton Smith's short story, *The Treader of the Dust*.

perfectly clear, my vision began to take in vast vistas of space—represented by aggregates of gigantic cubes scattered along a gulf of violent radiation—whilst my mind began to feel an intolerable consciousness of unrolled aeons . . . as if all of eternity were about to pour its simultaneous burthen upon me. It is impossible to describe such a mixed sensation—and it lacks absolutely the definiteness and dramatic value needed for fiction. In the dream I was alarmed and repelled—and I seemed to *recognise* some *known and definite evil* which I cannot recall now. I felt obliged to do something toward stopping the rite—and feigned an illness and a wish to retire. The men respected this wish, and withdrew rather mockingly—triumphing, of course, in my admission of an element of validity in the supernatural. (The dream is really *inconsistent*—for despite my initial scepticism, my recognition of a cosmic horror in the rite seems unattended with surprise.) But this was not the end. I was left with a burning curiosity about the thing I had experienced, and at dawn set out for the home of the most learned of this strange group—the man who lived highest up on that unfamiliar hill. When I reached there an unknown evil seemed to brood over the street, and I felt some trepidation in calling *unannounced*—contrary to the custom and wishes of this odd brotherhood. An incident of the walk thither (sight of a single-truck street-car with a certain sign) places the period of the dream around 1907. I entered the ancient house and mounted the creaking stairs—seeming to feel that the whole place had gone far in decay since last I was there. When I knocked at my host's door I felt an unexplained surge of fear. It was promptly opened by the occupant, but I felt sure that this man was not—or *not quite*—my host. He was very provoked and discourteous about my unannounced call, and before long three or four of the others filtered into the room. Only then did I look beyond a usually-drawn portiere at the farther end—seeing there a laboratory with strange phials and beakers that I had never seen before. In the centre of this laboratory was a table bearing a form in white—that of my host. I felt that he was not dead, but rather that he was somehow more alive—or quasi-living—than any of the precisely duplicated (and still dinner-jacketed) shapes around me. Their talk was very confused. "Now you have seen, you must not come again" . . . . . "He must not even leave." . . . . "You ought to have known." . . . . . etc. In the midst of this I suddenly turned and fled. One of the men tried to stop me, but he seemed

to have no power of grasping. His hand descended on my arm so that I *saw* it, but I *felt* nothing. It then occurred to me that I had never physically touched any of these queer fellows, the custom of handshaking having been evidently alien to them. Nothing prevented my descent of the stairs, or my passage down the street. At the home of one of the other brotherhood members, that individual was standing on his ancient high steps. He smilingly invited me in, but I hurried on—feeling something ineffably evil and sardonic behind the smile. The dream did not terminate in awakening, but passed off into something trivial—I think the street turned into a modern downtown street, and that I began making purchases in familiar shops. But it was damn vivid while it lasted, and I recalled it at once when I *did* awake. Still, its power resided in some dim lurking element too intangible for any but a master to get on paper. The horror evoked by that incantation in my room, and the nightmare of the ancient house (upon which I *just failed* to stumble), were strange and potent—yet altogether indescribable—things. Only last night I had another dream—of going back to 598 Angell Street after infinite years. The neighbourhood was deserted and grass-grown, and the houses were half-falling to pieces. The key on my ring fitted the mouldering door of 598, and I stepped in amidst the dust of centuries. Everything was as it was around 1910—pictures, furniture, books, etc., all in a state of extreme decay. Even objects which have been with me constantly in all later homes were there in their old positions, sharing in the general dissolution and dust-burial. I felt an extreme terror—and when *footsteps* sounded draggily from the direction of my room I turned and fled in panic. I would not admit to myself what it was I feared to confront . . . . . but my fear also had the effect of making me shut my eyes as I raced past the mouldy, nitre-encrusted *mirror* in the hall. Out into the street I ran—and I noted that none of the ruins were of buildings newer than about 1910. I had covered about half a block—of continuous ruins, with nothing but ruins ahead—when I awaked shivering. At the last moment my great fear seemed to be of passing my birthplace and early home—the beloved 454 Angell Street—toward which I was headed. Later in the night I had another dream—about a stretch of lonely seashore and a sense of oppression and fear regarding something the waves might wash up—but this was too slight to be really worthy of record. Young Bloch is using his story based on my mediaeval, roof-monster dream as a serial in his high-school paper.



I haven't seen it, but will be amused to find out what the kid did with the idea. I hope my increased fantastic dreaming is a prelude to a new writing spell. All my recent attempts have been so unsatisfactory that I have destroyed them after three or four pages; and I keep asking myself with increasing frequency whether I am not, after all, unequal to the task of expressing myself in words.

.....

Glad you had a good view of the recent conjunction of Venus and the crescent moon. I saw it from my own west windows, and its natural impressiveness was enhanced by its setting. It was twilight, and the ancient roofs and boughs and towers and belfries of the hill were silhouetted blackly against a still-orange sky. The windows of the downtown office buildings, just beginning to light up, made the lower town look like a constellation—and the great red beacon atop the 26-story Industrial Trust Building (which dominates the town as the Pharos dominated Alexandria) was blazing portentously. In the southwest the lofty Georgian belfry of the new Court House loomed up darkly save for the lighted clock-face, the floodlights not having been turned on. And just south of this picturesque outline, high in the sky where the orange was turning to violet, floated Astarte's bediamonded crescent with the blazing planet close to its upper horn! It certainly was a sight to gasp at—the black towers and roofs against an orange west, the twinkling turrets of the lower town, and the horned moon with its strangely luminous companion. Assuredly, I shall not soon forget it!

Yrs. for the primal litany of Neph—  
E'ch-Pi-El

674. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

From the Ruined Brick Tower  
with the Sealed Door.  
Hour of the Black, Beating Wings.  
Dec. 13, 1933

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Glad to hear that the *Doorstep* did not impress you as too inadequate—though I still feel a profound dissatisfaction with something about it. In everything I do there is a certain concreteness, extrava-

gance, or general crudeness which defeats the vague but insistent object I have in mind. I start out trying to find symbols expressive of a certain mood induced by a certain visual conception (such as a sunset beyond fantastic towers, a steep, cobblestoned hill street, a great stone vault, a sense of alienage and ineffable antiquity in a house, a stirring of black wings over a vast abyss, or a cryptic beam of light from a primordial stone turret in an Asian desert of rock), but when I come to put anything on paper the chosen symbols seem forced, awkward, childish, exaggerated, and essentially inexpressive. I have staged a cheap, melodramatic puppet-show without saying what I wanted to say in the first place. Whether the sensations I strive to utter are actually too nebulous or intangible for concrete utterance, or whether I am simply unequal to the task of uttering them, I have not yet been able to decide; although I tend to incline toward the latter explanation. And—adopting this theory—I am further unable to decide whether my incapacity proceeds from a lack of natural endowments, or whether it is a result of excessive familiarity with pulp fiction and its puerile crudities. But be all this as it may, the fact remains that whatever I write lacks the subtlety and maturity needed to give really effective expression to the mood behind the picture. For example—at present I am haunted by the cloudy notion of brooding, elder forces surrounding or pervading an ancient house and seeking to achieve some sort of bodily formulation. Well and good. A real artist could make something of the idea. But when I sit down and try to think up the suitable elements—the nature of the elder forces, the reason for their concentration in this spot, the precise manner of their manifestation, their motive in seeking embodiment, and their procedure when embodied—I find that every idea occurring to me is hackneyed and commonplace. What I get is a mere catalogue of stock paraphernalia too crude and derivative to have any convincingness or adult significance. What I wanted to say remains unsaid—and the mystery of an old, shadowy house's suggestions remains unexplained. Thus I feel poignantly the truth of that observation in W. Compton Leith's *Serenica*—"but woe to those who are made to dream the creator's dream without his finer understanding or his skill of capture." During the past week—and largely under the imaginative stimulus resulting from my trip to Plymouth's archaic lanes and bordering hills—I have been constantly attempting tales; though each one has been destroyed after a few pages because of the imaginative barrenness and

cheap, concrete mechanicality revealed. After all, it may be that my relation to phantasy is that of the appreciative reader and spectator rather than that of the utterer or creator. At any rate, I shall not finish any more tales unless they are better than my previous attempts. Meanwhile the experimenting goes on . . . the quest for even half-way adequate images and incidents. I'll think over that possible change in the ending of the *Doorstep* tale. If there were any objection, it would be merely that the use of magic on Derby's part is *unnecessary*. The principle of exchange is so fully outlined before, that the existence of consciousness in the tranferred victim is provided for without an additional element. However, it might be more effective—because less outrageously improbable in atmosphere—to go back and start the matter afresh by having the survival of consciousness in the corpse something resulting from a special and immediate sorcery rather than from the general mental mastery established by Ephraim-Asenath. In that case Asenath (as Edward would come to realise when the pull from the grave began to be apparent) would have had time during a death struggle to formulate a spell holding her consciousness to her soon-to-be-dead body. This would have to be indicated in Edward's final communication. *Then* it might be that Edward, when realising that his mind was being crowded out, could be represented as weaving a spell to preserve a trace of consciousness in the buried body after his mind-vibrations were transferred to that horrible vehicle. However—it is doubtful whether he could be willing to do this *voluntarily*, even to save the world from Ephraim, since the experience of being in a rotting body, with consciousness, would be so necessarily hideous. The transfer of *personality* to the corpse must of course be *automatic*, since *exchange* is the basic principle of the whole story. The dead Asenath could not take over Edward's body without sending his personality somehow into her own remains. It is this *inevitability* which creates the whole story. Also, it is unnecessary to invoke magic in the matter of the corpse's escape from its shallow grave. Asenath could have escaped had she wished to, but she did not so wish. There was no need of securing liberty for a dead and anyhow unwanted corpse when a good living body in the outside world was about to be seized. Indeed, Ephraim-Asenath probably took a grim pleasure in the idea of thrusting Edward's consciousness down into that corpse-pit of horror. She never thought the poor sap would have the stamina to escape, even though

he had nerved himself up to the killing. And so it goes. There might be an increase in plausibility to have Asenath and Edward unable to survive consciously in a dead body without additional special spells—and yet this idea would involve an extra element easily capable of cumbrousness, besides subtracting measurably from the air of *inevitability* pervading and motivating the whole tale. There would be a sort of decrease in atmospheric *unity*—and a very sharp contradiction of the aura of *essential passivity* (except in simple, desperate lunges under direct and irresistible stimuli) surrounding Edward's character. In a word, I can see reasons both for and against the change; and will reflect carefully upon the matter. We'll see what Two-Gun Bob and the Peacock Sultan have to say about it. I'm still undecided whether I'll let young Comte d'Erlette tear it to shreds. After two or three more verdicts I may consider a trial on Satrap Pharnabazus—though I don't want to overload him after his belated acceptance of the collaborated piece. And I don't like the psychological effect on myself of repeated rejections. *L'affaire Knopf* is still too damned recent.

Regarding Roman Gaul—of course, the people were largely of the Gallic race, but they had the culture of Rome and employed Roman names. Local municipal officials were native Gallo-Romans, but provincial governors (of gawd knows what race-stock in that age of imperial mongrelism) and the army were sent out from Italy. The matter of Druids is really quite all right; for although they were outlawed and officially obsolete, they really had tremendous influence in their remote backwaters. Even to the Romans in Italy they represented something fascinating and forbidden, and furtive consultations of them (as modern dopes consult clairvoyants and other representatives of unofficial supernaturalism today) were by no means infrequent among those supposed to hold them in abhorrence. For example—if we are to believe the account of Vopiscus in the Augustan History, at least two Emperors—Aurelianus and Diocletianus—consulted Druid priestesses in Gaul despite the outlawry of the sect. In the Regio Averonum, of course, Druidism was stronger than anywhere else—a circumstance perhaps connected with the doubtful and possibly very strange origin of the old tribe of Averones themselves. You of course recall that famous passage in Flavius Alesius, where it is suggested that the Averones (a dark race like the Aquitani) came from a great land in the western ocean which had sunk beneath the waves. Alesius has some



fascinating references to a terrifying set of tablets—the *Liber Ivonis*—in the possession of the Averones, which was said to have been brought by them from that lost ancient land whence they came. Whether this could be identical with that infamous *Livre d'Eibon* which in the 12th century the wizard Gaspard du Nord translated from some (so far) unascertained language into the French of Averoine, is a problem with which scholarship must sooner or later wrestle. But of the dark and curious reputation of the Averones there can of course be no doubt. All scholars recall the reference to this tribe and its hellish pre-Druidic deity in Valerius Trevirus' famous and rather sinister poem (circa A. D. 400) *De Noctis Rebus*:

NIGER.INFORMISQVE.VT.NVMEN.AVERONVM.SADOQVA.

Thus rendered in Theobald's translation (London, 1727):

Black and unshap'd, as pestilent a Clod  
As dread Sadoqua, Averonia's God.

Rome is a subject which has fascinated me uncannily ever since I first heard much of it around the age of six. From the moment I picked up any idea of its nature, history, and characteristics, and held in my own hands the actual Roman coins (about two dozen—now in my possession) of my grandfather's collection, I have had the most persistent sensation (out of which an occultist would make a case of metempsychosis, and a pseudo-scientist one of hereditary memory) of some ineluctable connexion with the ancient Respublica—of complete identification with the world of M. Porcius Cato, P. Cornelius Scipio, C. Laelius, M. Tullius Cicero and T. Lucretius Carus. It is at times almost as strong as my feeling of membership in the more recent eighteenth century—an actual Roman coin, statue, stela, sarcophagus, household utensil, or weapon moves me with the oddest sort of *pseudo-memory*; whilst pictures of Roman scenes prompt a kindred feeling mixed with certain unexplainable objections as if to *anachronisms* I cannot consciously place. It is utterly impossible, too, for me to regard Rome in a *detached* way. As soon as I get behind the age of the Saxons in England, say 450 A. D., my sense of personal connexion with my own blood-ancestors of the north utterly vanishes—giving place to a natural and unshakable feeling of *being a Roman*. Thus I cannot discuss Rome with a anti-Roman (cf. his *Worms of the Earth* etc.) like Two-Gun Bob without a sense of *personal anger* which I can repress only with diffi-

culty. The idea of the republic of the consuls and empire of the Caesars being other than *my country* is simply impossible for me to entertain. I recognise Rome's defects, but always have to excuse them as I would England's and America's. I cannot envisage antiquity except as a Roman. Anterior to the Saxon-England period, my own forbears become to me nothing more than "*those* Germani who harass *our* Roman frontiers along the Fluvii Rhenus et Danubius." Conan's identification of himself with the barbarous tribes who fought Rome is a feat of imagination I cannot possibly envisage—nor can I understand the feelings of those pious Puritans of early New England who viewed antiquity from a Biblical and Hebraic angle. To me, the idea of being anything but a Roman in ancient times is as grotesque as the idea of being anything but an Englishman is in modern times. Rome—to my subconscious mind—is the norm of antiquity. The northern races are simply opponents across the Rhine and Danube, or border people lately made Roman; whilst the "Holy Land" of the Sunday schools is simply a remote Syrian region which our general Cn. Pompeius took from a bunch of squabbling princelets in the consulship of M. Cicero and C. Antonius, whilst cleaning up the empire of the Seleucidae after the victory over Mithridates. Greece, too, has not for me the direct kinship it has for Loveman. I respect its superior culture, but I feel toward it the slight hostility of one who recalls the insults of the Tarentines, the plottings of Macedonia with Hannibal, and the haughty rebuffs of Diaeus and the Achaean League—all of which forced us to subjugate the Hellenic world and form out of it the ROMAN provinces of Achaia, Epirus, Illyricum, and so on. I think of Greeks as cultivated but somewhat sycophantic aliens—good tutors of rhetoric and philosophy, but a little servile, unctuous, ratlike, sharp, and effeminate—in a word, not quite as much *men* as real ROMANS. I can understand the tinge of patronage in the contemptuous diminutive expression *Graeculus*. In a word, I have to think of the whole Grecian world from a *Roman* angle—something connected with eastern wars and proconsuls and foreign travel and academic studies. In the ancient world, *home* means the temple-crowned hills and crowded lanes of ROMA, or the semi-wooded slopes and hilled fields and sprawling villas of the Sabine countryside. I even have a curious and anomalous sense of kinship with the hawk-nosed, broad-templed Roman *physiognomy*, (the blood composition of the Roman people is still highly obscure. A large Nordic

element probably did exist, but it was mixed—largely through the Etruscans—with much brachycephalic Alpine and possibly Semitic stock), aberrant as it is from the Nordic standpoint of my own blood. All *other* non-Nordic physiognomies repel me violently but the *Roman* features (which of course have no living representatives today), as displayed in the realistic portrait statuary of the republican age, produce in me a profound feeling of *stirred memories* and *quasi-identity*. I have the curious subconscious feeling not only that *people around me once looked like that*, but that *I once looked like that*. Which is rather amusing in view of the fact that I am actually the *utter reverse* of Roman in appearance—tall, chalk-white, and of a characteristic and unmistakable Nordic English physiognomy. In school I took to Latin as a duck to water, but found all other languages alien and repellent. French seemed to me a pitiful decadence-product; German a hateful tongue from across the Rhine-Danube frontier. Greek I liked and respected—but I found it difficult, and tended to translate it mentally into Latin. Nor have I ever quite ceased to have Roman *dreams* of the most puzzling vividness and detail. You probably recall the one I had in October 1927, in which I was a provincial quaestor named L. Caelius Rufus serving in Hispania Citerior and accompanying the proconsul P. Scribonius Libo and a cohort of infantry into the mountains behind Pompelo—where a nightmare doom overtook us all. I told that dream in full to Belknap, and he incorporated it without any linguistic change in his *Chaugnar* story.\*\* The vivid reality of that dream is impossible to describe. I lived *for days* as a Roman in Spain—rising, reading, talking, travelling—even after six years the memory is *disconcertingly* vivid. In view of phenomena like that I can well understand the supernatural beliefs of ages when psychological science—with its knowledge of early unconscious impressions and the associations, selective perceptions, and disproportionate image-retentions resulting from such—was unborn. Actually, I suppose my Roman “memories” come from a peculiar chain of associations. I loved *anything* in the *past*, and from infancy had a feeling of living in the bygone age represented by Providence’s ancient hill streets and the old books in the attic at home—that is, the 18th century. *Real* antiquity—2000 years instead of a

\*\* *The Horror from the Hills*, by Frank Belknap Long.

mere 150 years ago—represented an *intensification* of this time-defying feeling; and of all antiquity, only that of *Rome* was *realistically close* because *only the Romans used our alphabet* and had architectural forms (I doted on pictures) like the arches and columns and pediments of our familiar Georgian architecture. Also, my grandfather’s Roman coins were (except for an Egyptian ushabti and bit of mummy linen) the only *actual objects of the ancient world* which we had at home and accessible to my actual touch. I cannot begin to suggest the feeling of *awe* and *anomalous familiarity* which those coins—the actual products of Roman engravers and mints, and actually passed from Roman hand to Roman hand twenty centuries ago—awaked in me. The half-effaced designs of imperial heads of symbolic figures—the almost illegible lettering—S. C. . . . Cos. III . . . . . CONSTANTINUS . . . . . COMMODUS . . . . . AEQUITAS . . . . . Even today as I take them out and look at them the old feeling of uncanny Roman linkage returns. And in the front parlour downstairs (a really hauntingly beautiful room, furnished in an old-gold motif with ebony-and-gilt woodwork and a great pier glass) was a *life-size* marble reproduction of the *Roman* portrait-bust popularly (and erroneously) known today as “Clytië”—the only *life-size* piece of statuary in the house, and highly impressive on its gilded pedestal. (We still have it—and have resurrected it from storage to adorn a niche in the Georgian living-room at 66 College). Well—anyhow—of all these incidents, plus some timely allusions to Rome in a childish reading-book and some pictures of Roman ruins which my grandfather had brought back from Italian travels, was compounded my strange feeling of kinship and identification, with all its peculiar intensity. Despite a multiplicity of other interests it has never left me—so that one of my most poignant experiences was a first sight of the splendid Pantheon model in the Metropolitan Museum in 1922. To this day I have a touchy *Roman patriotism* which resents any slight toward the ancient mistress of the World, and which exults in all the visible symbols of Roman dominion—the fasces, the glistening eagles, the she-wolf, the triumphal arch, the sonorous Latin speech . . . . . and all this despite the absence in my veins of any drop of non-British blood or any hereditary tradition apart from England and New England. . . . . Anyhow, I acquired a tremendous instinctive sense of Roman linkage, and ransacked libraries with



almost morbid avidity for anything and everything pertaining to Rome. Especially was I on the lookout for *anything which would bring the period of Roman culture toward the present*—hence my disproportionate interest in the late Empire (which I always recognised as decadent and mongrelised, and inferior to the Ciceronian age) and in the last survivals of Roman culture in Italy, France, and Spain. Half the stories I wrote during that research period (when I was 14, 15, and 16) had to do with strange survivals of Roman civilisation in Africa, Asia, the Antarctic, the Amazon Valley, and even pre-Columbian North America. They are all destroyed now, but I wish I had kept the one (based on an actual dream of 1904) about *Roman Providence*, with its familiar hills crowned with many-columned temples and its forum near the site of the Great Bridge (I had a marble bridge there—the Pons Æbutii, named from L. Æbutius, the founder of the colony of B. C. 45, which was tragically cut off from the mother respublica whence the colonising fleet of six quinquiremes had sailed.) I had Roman wars with the Narragansetts, Wampanoags, and Pequots, a gradual blood mixture which gave the whole mass of Eastern Indians their still-unexplained (in view of the known Mongoloid basis of the whole race) aquiline features, and a final destruction of MOTIATICUM (2nd *Moshassuck*) by an earthquake. I had the story begin with the exhumation of a Roman column on the ancient hill during the digging of a sewer-main—the universal perplexity it aroused, and the dreams it inspired in one lone student. My native highway Angell Street (*actually* the Wampanoag Trail, older than English colonisation, and *naturally* determined as the shortest line between the ford at the head of the bay and the narrow ferrying-place in the Seekonk River) was a Roman road, lined with tombs as it stretched beyond the marble temples and brick-and-plaster houses of urban Motiaticum. ....

Yrs. for the Black Catechism of Primal Averonia—  
E'ch-Pi-El

675. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Inmost Cavern of Anathas—  
Hour of the Salamander-Feeding.  
(December 17, 1933)

Dear Ar-Ech-Bei:—

.....  
It interests me to hear that you have New England lines in your ancestry. Only half of my lineage is New England, the other (paternal) half being of Old England till the 1820's. The Lovecrafts are a Devonshire line not leaving England till 1827, and then settling in upper New York State. My maternal ancestry is typical of old Rhode-Island—the parts settled from the Massachusetts Bay or directly from England (as distinguished from the eastern strip settled by Plymouth folk and taken over from Massachusetts in 1747) prior to 1660. Some of my New England lines are Phillips, Place, Rathbone, Casey, (originally Irish Protestant; lone survivor—of his household—in Dublin massacre of 1641, settled in Newport 1658) Dyer, Perkins, Whipple, Mathewson, Millard, Fish, Ellis, Wilcox, Hazard, Safford, Godfrey, Newman, Clemence, West, Brownell, Dodge, Field, Malavery, Gater, &c. I am not, personally, a very zealous genealogical researcher; but others before me have been more conscientious, so that through charts and other papers I have a fair idea of a majority of my progenitors since 1600. The outspread array is not, on the whole, a very startling one either as regards eminence or as regards crime. The most truly vivid figure on the records—about whom there is also plenty in print—is not a *lineal* ancestor at all, but the *brother* of a lineal ancestor. He very conveniently embodies *both* kinds of distinction—ability and crime! This bird is one Samuel Casey, Jr. born in 1724 and the brother of my great-great-great-grandfather John Casey (1723-94). Sam certainly was quite a boy. He lived in King's (now Washington) County, where most of my maternal stock came from and where life resembled that of the South (with good-sized plantations, plenty of slaves, and a patriarchal social system with the Church of England dominant) more than it did that of the adjoining Puritan regions. Being a younger son, he learned the silver-

smith's art in Newport, and by 1750 was the leading silver-smith in Rhode Island. Specimens of his work are in both the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of N. Y., and they display a classic perfection speaking well for his genius and his mastery of technique. Almost every history of the fine arts in America gives him mention. Well—that's the bright side. Now for the reverse of the picture. Sam had a fine house with panelling, rich furniture, and all the usual accessories at a crossroads two miles south of the village of Little Rest (now Kingston)—but one night in Sept. 1764 this was burned to the ground with most of its contents. This was a knockout blow, and it evidently set his mind working in pretty desperate channels. At any rate, by 1768 we find him exercising his skill as a portrait artist in a very perilous field—graving the likenesses of certain royal personages of the houses of Bourbon and Braganza. Unfortunately the backgrounds of these pleasing bas-reliefs were close reproductions in everything but purity of metal, of Spanish milled dollars and Portuguese moidores, then widely current in the colonies. In other words, my revered and artistic great-great-great-granduncle has become a counterfeiter! The law got him in 1770, and he was sentenced to be hanged on Nov. 4 of that year—but that little ceremony never took place. It must be remarked that in these rebellious colonies such incidents as smuggling, counterfeiting, and even outright piracy were very often widely winked at—this lawless spirit really lying at the base of the now-whitewashed and patriotically exploited revolution of 1775-1783. Sam Casey, in truth, was no worse than a vast number of his neighbours—dozens of whom had certainly aided him not only in getting tools and metal, but in circulating his unlawful products. When the eve of his hanging came, many outwardly solid citizens must have trembled regarding what he might reveal in the gallows' shadow, so in the end they decided to cancel the show. Thus on the night of Nov. 3 the local gaol was stormed by a band of men (in the true spirit of the Boston Tea Party) blacked up as negroes, who liberated all the arrested counterfeiters and gave Sam Casey a horse to speed him on his way to safety. He then and there disappears from the knowledge of man—though one must always wonder what the future of so really notable a silver-smith may have been. Did he settle in New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Annapolis, or Charleston under another name, practicing his art as of yore? These things no one knows, in all probability no

one ever will know. But Sam is an interesting figure, and I forgive him his coining for the sake of his undoubted mastery of a noble and ancient art. My paternal line is infested with clergymen—none of any eminence. A great-great-grandfather, the Rev. Francis Fulford (b. 1735) was Vicar of Dunsford in Devonshire. My continuously traced male line does not extend back of 1560, though Lovecrafts and Lovecrofts (the latter the earlier spelling) have been fairly plentiful in Devon since the beginning of the 15th century. I am probably the only bearer of the name Lovecraft in the United States. My father's maternal grandmother was a Morris of Closemont, Glamorganshire, Wales—thus bringing me into touch with the Arthur Machen country. This line is Anglo-Norman, but there are enough Celtic contributing streams to give me a touch of Druidic as well as of Teutonic heritage. The Allgood line, from Northumberland, no doubt (like all Northumbrian lines) contains something of the Dane. Three or four contributory strains give me lines extending back to the Conquest, to Charlemagne, &c. Of actual peers, the nearest one in my direct line is George Legge, the first Lord Dartmouth, (17th cent.—I forget exact date). There is, however, a nearer baronet on the Morris line, and a plain knight (politically created by George IV on his accession) among the Allgoods as late as 1760. However—if you want to find a real genealogist among the gang, try my young friend Wilfred B. Talman (whose influence is probably responsible for whatever recent attention I have given the subject). He descends largely from the old Dutch families of the Hudson Valley, and has made exhaustive researches both in his own lineage and in the general antiquarian lore of his region. James F. Morton—our fellow-member of the N. A. P. A.—is a still deeper student of the subject, and has traced his lines back to half the Kings and Potentates of Europe. Incidentally—he is the only member of our crowd who has a blood strain in common with me. We find that we both descend from the John Perkins (1590-1654) of Newent, Gloucestershire, who settled in Ipswich, Mass. in 1633. Indeed, we also have his son John Jr. (1614-1700) as a common forbear—Morton descending from *his* son Isaac, while I descend from Ike's brother Sam. Frank B. Long descends on his mother's side from the Mansfields and Dotys of New England, and paternally from Pennsylvania stock. Robert E. Howard is a great genealogist, and descends from fine old Southern stock—Ervin, &c—largely of Celtic origin. Derleth has a most unusual ancestry—old-



world German, Pennsylvania German, and a direct male line going through Germany to France and the line of Comtes d'Erlette. Klarkash-Ton comes from a fine old line of Ashton-Smiths or Assheton-Smiths. I believe his father was born in England. Whitehead was of very interesting lineage—paternally Virginia, and maternally Scotch-West-Indian. One of his forbears was an important Masonic dignitary in Charleston. W. Paul Cook is descended from Bennington Wentworth, the famous Royal Governor of New Hampshire in the middle 18th century.

Yr. most obt. hbl. Servt.—Ech-Pi-El

676. TO JAMES F. MORTON

230, West-97th St., cor. of the Bloom-  
ingdale Road, over-against Stryker's Bay.  
Bloomingdale, in His Majty's Province  
of New York.

Dec. 29, 1933

Parallelless Praeses of Picaresque Peregrinations:—

Have been hectically rush'd ever since I struck this damned burg. Over at Loveman's Christmas—and he gave me a real Egyptian *ushabi*—a thing I've wanted for years. Wait till you see how I've combined it with another gift from Sonny. At Wandrei's Wednesday, and met his brother—a *marvellous* fantastic artist. Also met Desmond Hall, Editor of *Astounding*. You'll see Wandrei Monday—he'll be here for dinner.

Well—I had a great Yule at home before hopping the midnight stage for putrescent megalopolis. Fixed up the sitting-room hearth with greens and surprised my aunt—and borrowed a cat for the occasion. Heard carol-singing in the early evening in the quaint cobblestoned courtyard of the Georgian Beckwith mansion (where my aunt was in 1927) halfway down the ancient hill. Old Providence . . . . . and where! Glorious world of traditional continuity . . . . . and to think that supposedly sane people live *voluntarily* in this lousy rat-warren which now seethes around me!

Yr. dutiful cousin and obt. Servt.—

Πέρκινς Θεοβάλδος

677. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Pinnacle of Unknown Kadath  
Hour of the Red Aurora  
(January 13, 1934)

Dear Ar-Ech-Bei:—

. . . I really had a delightful time—seeing all the old gang . . . . Long, Loveman, Talman, Wandrei, Leeds, Morton &c . . . . and meeting a number of interesting new people connected with weird writing. One of these latter was Wandrei's younger brother (who has a yarn in the current *WT*)—a weird artist of astonishing skill and genius. Some of his demoniac sketches almost knocked me over with their inspired potency and masterful technique. This kid has gone farther in his art than have any of the rest of us in our writing—it can certainly be only a question of a few years before he is recognised widely as a leading figure in his field. I also met Koenig—who lends me weird books, and who is delightfully pleasant in person—and T. Everett Harré, editor of the anthology *Beware After Dark*. Harré is flush just now from the sale of a book to the cinema—but with his tastes he'll be broke again in a year. He has a marvellous *cat* named William, to which he is touchingly devoted. But the meeting which will interest you most is that with A. Merritt, the *Moon Pool* man. It seems he had long known my work and held a very kindly opinion of it. Hearing of my presence in NY he took steps to get in touch with me, and finally invited me to dinner at his club—the Players, which occupies Edwin Booth's old home in Gramercy Park. Merritt is a stout, sandy, grey-eyed man of about 45 or 50—extremely pleasant and genial, and a brilliant and well-informed conversationalist on all subjects. He is associate editor of Hearst's *American Weekly*, but all his main interests centre in his weird writing. He agrees with me that the original *Moon Pool* novelette in the *All-Story* is his best work. Just now he is doing a sequel to *Burn, Witch, Burn* (which I haven't read, but which he says he'll send me), whose locale will be the fabulous sunken city of Ys, off the coast of Brittany. It will bring in the comparatively little-known legendry of *shadow-magic*. Merritt has a wide acquaintance among mystical enthusiasts, and

is a close friend of old Nicholas Roerich, the Russian painter whose weird Thibetan landscapes I have so long admired. I was extremely glad to meet Merritt in person, for I have admired his work for 15 years. He has certain defects—caused by catering to a popular audience—but for all that he is the most poignant and distinctive fantaisiste now contributing to the pulps. As I mentioned some time ago—when you lent me the *Mirage* installment—he has a peculiar power of working up an atmosphere and investing a region with an aura of unholy dread. I think I've read everything of his except *The Metal Monster* and *Burn, Witch, Burn*—and thanks to him these two deficiencies will probably be remedied before long. . . .

On one occasion Long and I received a call from the youthful editors of *Fantasy Magazine*—formerly the *Science Fiction Digest*—Conrad Ruppert and Julius Schwartz. Both are admirably bright and pleasant boys, and it turns out that Ruppert is the printer of *The Fantasy Fan*. . . .

—Yr. obt. hble. Servt.  
Ech-Pi-El

678. TO F. LEE BALDWIN

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 13, 1934

Dear Mr. Baldwin:—

...  
*The Turn of the Screw* is the one weird product of the eminent American author Henry James—who must not be confused with the living British author, Montague Rhodes James. It is a very powerful & subtle piece of work—about the evil effect which the ghosts of a dead servant & governess wrought on two sensitive & susceptible children. All readers may not like it equally, but no one can deny its power. . . . It has a trifle of James' well-known involvedness & preciousness, but not as much as some of his later work has. As you know, James had 3 distinct literary periods—which some wit has called those of James the First, James the Second, and the Old Pretender.

... As for magazine payment rates for weird stuff—the best that any of the pulp magazines give nowadays is about a cent a word. I received \$140.00 for the *Witch House*, which ran to some 32 pages of MS. Price & I will get exactly the same amount for our collaboration. Some other magazines pay much less—especially *Wonder Stories*, whose editor Gernsback is a veritable Shylock. Hugo the Rat (as Clark Ashton Smith & I affectionately call him) never pays at all except under pressure—in fact, one New York lawyer makes a specialty of Gernsback's bad debt collections! It is really impossible to devise any equitable scale of material recompense for literature, painting, or other forms of aesthetics. Art is so utterly remote from commerce in motivation, psychology, methods, standards, & objects, that no fixed rapport is even conceivable. Payment for commercial fiction is never made on a basis of artistic merit, but is determined solely by the possible financial profit which the work in question can bring the magazine. Thus a miserable mess of sensational hash likely to attract a vast flock of cheap readers is considered more "valuable"—& paid more highly—than a carefully wrought & intrinsically splendid piece of literature which will appeal only to the minority of intelligent & cultivated readers. Under our present economic system there is no reason why this should not be so—since financial value depends altogether upon negotiability. The creation of art must thus be regarded as something absolutely distinct from commercial processes—something as distinct & non-negotiable as excellence of personal character (which is itself a form of art). The only legitimate motive of the aesthetic creator is a high-grade form of personal satisfaction—he must never expect to cash in on his talents, or at least, never expect to cash in in any way proportionate with his intrinsic merit. Of course, some first-rate artists *do* reap good financial rewards when they happen to please a large audience or to acquire in some way an imposing reputation. But this is all a matter of chance. There are more fine artists starving—or supported from other sources—than there are fine artists living on the proceeds of their real creative work. This is a natural condition which we have to accept. There is no reason why it should be otherwise, nor is anything to be done about it. We live in a blind & impersonal cosmos without any such values as "right" or "justice". These picturesque conceptions—& all the high-sounding "oughts" derived from them—are mere inventions & illusions of the gullible & egotistical human brain.



What you say of the weather & physiography of your locality interests me greatly, since my maternal grandfather—the late Whipple V. Phillips—spent a great deal of time in the same general region (in Idaho) in the 1890's. He was president of the Owyhee Land & Irrigation Co., which had for its object the damming of the Snake River & the irrigation of the surrounding farming & fruit-growing region. I was a small boy then; but his trips out there, & his descriptions of the country, interested me prodigiously. In his offices downtown he had all sorts of samples of Idaho minerals & produce, & his occasional letters postmarked "Boise City," "Mountain Home," & "Grand View" (the latter place named by him, & occupying land owned by the company) lent a sense of reality to these exotic specimens. There was considerable trouble about building the dam, & it was twice washed away by floods. When my grandfather died in 1904 his estate was in considerable confusion, so that we were all left poor. His Idaho holdings were closed out—but I have always wondered what became of the Snake River project, & whether his enthusiastic dreams for the future of the region were ever realised.

Yrs most cordially & sincerely,

H. P. Lovecraft

679. TO MISS MARGARET SYLVESTER

66 College St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Jany. 13, 1934

Dear Miss Sylvester:—

... In popular folklore Walpurgis Night—the night of April 30–May 1—is regarded as a time of spectral manifestations much as its autumnal counterpart Hallowe'en is ... But why, you will ask, were April 30 & Oct. 31 the chosen times for the witch-cult's nocturnal celebrations? The answer is that these dates have been connected with rites & ceremonies of some sort since the very dawn of the human race. It is well known that all new cults & religions seize on old festival-dates to celebrate—translating the observances into the terms of the new faith. Thus the primitive winter festival of late December, which celebrates the northward turning of the sun & the prophecy of spring contained

in that event, has been adopted successively by the Roman & Christian religions, appearing respectively under the names of "Saturnalia" & "Christmas". Well—in prehistoric & pre-agricultural times there is every reason to believe that April 30 & Oct. 31 were celebrated as marking the two annual breeding seasons of the flocks & herds. Since these flocks & herds were all-important to a wandering race who depended wholly on them for food, it is natural that these dates should seem very significant. They must have been marked by vivid & perhaps repulsive fertility-rites, & it is known that they continued to be observed among the peasantry long after the dawn of agriculture had made them obsolete in the race's main religions. Curious memories of April 30 & Oct. 31 undoubtedly persisted in a subterranean way—so that when a dark cult sprang up in revolt against the dominant faith, it was very natural to turn back & adopt these dates as the chief festival occasions. I may add that there is still considerable dispute about the precise origin of the witch-cult. Some anthropologists deny that it was a fresh growth of the Middle Ages, & believe it formed a continuous secret survival of a very primitive nature-worship which both classical paganism & Christianity strictly banned. Certainly, it had many elements derived from primal nature-worship—but we cannot be sure whether these were directly inherited or secondarily absorbed. ....

And now for the name "Walpurgis Night". Famous as this is, ... it is really a mere matter of *accidental coincidence* due to the falling of a certain saint's day on the date of the horrible spring "Sabbat" of the witch-cult. May 1st is the day sacred to St. Walburga or Walpurgis, an English nun of the 8th century who helped to introduce Christianity into Germany. Among the Germans the old weird memories & still-surviving Sabbat-rites of May-Eve became very easily fused with the worship of the saint—especially since certain miracles were associated with her ... or rather, with her tomb. Hence—with typical cosmic irony—one of the two most anti-Christian festivals in Europe became known by the name of a Christian saint! The Germans always regarded "Walpurgis-Nacht" with fear, & associated its reputed phenomena with the well-known mountain (highest in the Harz range) called the Brocken—whose circling cloud of mist causes visitors to behold their magnified shadows at the summit under rather spectral circumstances. It is possible that actual Sabbats of the witch-cult were held on the Brocken. The reason why this essentially German term, "Walpurgis

Night', has been transferred to modern English folklore is that much of our weird-library tradition stems from German ballads & romances of the 18th & early 19th centuries. One does not meet the term in our older literature—but by 1820 or 1830 it seems to be firmly fixed among us. ....

Regarding the *Necronomicon*—I must confess that this monstrous & abhorred volume is merely a figment of my own imagination! Inventing horrible books is quite a pastime among devotees of the weird, & .... many of the regular *W. T.* contributors have such things to their credit—or discredit. It rather amuses the different writers to use one another's synthetic demons & imaginary books in their stories—so that Clark Ashton Smith often speaks of my *Necronomicon* while I refer to his *Book of Eibon* ... & so on. This pooling of resources tends to build up quite a pseudo-convincing background of dark mythology, legendry, & bibliography—though of course none of us has the least wish actually to mislead readers. ....

Yrs. most cordially & sincerely,  
H. P. Lovecraft

680. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 25, 1934

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Glad to hear your wound is healing, & trust you will not become discouraged because of the slowness of the process. Destroyed tissue delays the healing, but does not make the ultimate recovery any less complete & permanent. I ought to know, since in 1907 I had nearly the whole underside of the 3d finger of my right hand burned off with phosphorus through an accident in my laboratory. Immense amounts of tissue were destroyed, & the thing took a long time to heal (I learned to write, after a fashion, with my left hand during the siege)—but within six months the finger was free from bandages, & it is now virtually as good as ever except for looks.

.....

As my recent cards have apprised you, my visit to Long did finally materialise as a pleasant & fortnight-protracted reality. After a home Christmas including fireside decorations, surprise gifts, a turkey dinner at the boarding-house across the back garden, & a stroll half-way down the hill to hear the carol-singing at the old Truman Beckwith mansion, I took the midnight coach & arrived in Manhattan the next morning—in time for a duplicate Yule at the Long hearth. Mrs. Long is now quite recovered, & all the household were united in absorption in Belknap's new hobby—tropical fish. These sprightly finny citizens—whose ideas anent temperature are much like my own—form quite a heavy responsibility; since their diet, aëration, & heat have to be regulated with the strictest care. Their infinite variety, however, makes them much more interesting than goldfish; so that I fancy the present fashion for them will prove reasonably permanent. ....

I saw the old year out at Samuel Loveman's—where one of the guests was the mother of the hapless poet Hart Crane, who committed suicide in 1932. Loveman quite overwhelmed me by giving me several objects for my collection of antiquities—a real Egyptian *nshabti* (small funerary statuette) 5000 years old, a Mayan stone idol of almost equal antiquity, & a carved wooden monkey from the East Indian island of Bali.\* Another correspondent I met was H. C. Koenig—who has for some time been lending me books on witchcraft from his remarkably extensive library. I managed to take in most of the museums—seeing at the Metropolitan the new Assyrian objects (including a pair of Layard's colossal winged bulls—palace gate pylons), the colossal Etruscan Mars statues in terra-cotta, & the recently acquired Greek statues from the Lansdowne collection—an Amazon & a Diadumonos, both magnificent, though extensively restored. ....

Heard an interesting Poe programme over my aunt's radio Jany. 19—when the cottage in Philadelphia was dedicated. Best speaker was Prof. Phelps of Yale. Also heard broadcast from Byrd antarctic expedition—couldn't distinguish words, but the idea of an audible voice from the vast wastral realm of desolation was in itself exciting. Jan. 22 my aunt & I heard an interesting lecture by Prof. C. E. M. Joad of London—*Is Progress a Delusion?* The speaker agreed, of course, that it is a

\* He also gave Long a splendid little Egyptian sphinx statuette which I wish I could get hold of!



delusion unless the human race can become less childish in its mentality than it has been in the past. ....

Yrs most sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

681. TO F. LEE BALDWIN

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 31, 1934

My dear Mr. Baldwin:—

... I have always been fond of the country, though I have never lived there. In my youth I was as used to rural as to urban scenes, since my early home was in a part of Providence not far—in those days—from the open fields & woods. Now most of that country is solidly built up with residential streets; although a small strip of it—the high wooded bluff along the Seekonk River & an adjacent series of ravines—has been preserved in its primitive state as a park reservation. Even today I get out to the country as often as I can. Almost every warm summer afternoon I take my work or reading in a bag & set out for the wooded river-bank or the fields & woods north of Providence—spending the time till dusk in one or more favourite rustic spots. My present residence, however, is in the compact part of the town near the college—on the crest of the precipitous hill forming the oldest part of Providence. I like the location very well, since ancient houses & colonial street vistas form almost my leading hobby. ... In my neighbourhood many of the streets are not greatly changed since the Revolution—there are churches built in 1775 & 1816, college edifices of 1770 and 1820, private houses going back as far as 1742, a schoolhouse of 1769, a market house of 1773, a court & colony house of 1761, & so on. The extreme steepness of the hill has kept off business invasion, & here & there are little bits of almost rustic or village scenery which the city has overtaken & passed beyond without greatly disturbing. The house I live in was built about 1800, & has all the earmarks of old colonial architecture—classic carved doorway, small-paned windows, six-panel doors, wide floor-boards, Georgian mantels, primitive latches, &c. It is

situated at the back of a quaint grassy court off College St., just behind the John Hay Library of Brown University. There are old-fashioned gardens on the south & west, & the vista of old-time roofs & steeples & sunset hills from the west windows is exquisite. My aunt & I occupy the upper half of the house—2nd floor & attic—while a school-teacher lives in the lower half—1st floor & basement. I have, as my own personal domain, a large library & small adjoining bedroom on the southern side of the building. The library—where I work—is on the southwest corner & my desk is at a west window with a splendid view. Around me are the old books & pictures & furniture that I have known all my life, & without which I should scarcely know what to do. I am very much devoted to familiar scenes & objects—this being the reason I have not long ago moved south. ....

*Through the Gates of the Silver Key* is a sequel to my old *Silver Key*—although I repeat enough of the former story to make it complete in itself. ... As to the manner of collaboration—Price wrote a rough draught of what he thought would be a good sequel & sent it to me. I changed everything to suit myself, added an opening section, appended a whole second half involving interplanetary adventure, & finally put the whole story into my own words. Of Price's share there is now left only the general situation, a few descriptive touches in the central part, & a mathematical theory of time which he was anxious to insert. He wants to have his name omitted as co-author, but I am insisting on its retention, since the tale is not of the sort I would have written without him. But this is the last collaborative job I shall ever attempt. The process is merely a hindrance when one has something of one's own to express. ....

As to the way I think of—and compose—stories, there is no one general rule. The ideas come from almost anywhere—a dream, a picture, a landscape, a street vista, a newspaper paragraph, another story, a stray thought or impression—and my ways of developing them are just as varied. Sometimes an idea suggests a complete story before I know it, in which case I can sit right down & reel the thing off in a single day, but this is not very frequent. Usually I reflect on an idea for several days, letting associative incidents develop in my imagination, & selecting the most effective ones. Then I begin constructing tentative synopses till I hit on one that seems to hold together well & have some degree of dramatic power. When I get that I start writing—and the length of

time I take depends on the difficulty of the theme & the length of the text. For a short story of average length, 3 days is perhaps the most common period spent in the actual writing. I revise my stuff very rigorously, & make frequent changes while composing. Often when I'm half through a story a new idea will occur to me, so that I'll pause & change important features—perhaps adding a whole new introduction or extending the action far beyond the limits originally planned. The *Whisperer* took about a fortnight—the *Witch House* somewhat less than a week. As to the value of my stuff—I wish it were as great as you so charitably assume. In reality, however, one must relinquish such pleasant illusions. Of all the *W. T.* contributors, only a few are likely to break into real literature. Derleth will—though not through his weird work. Smith may. Wandrei & Long very possibly may. Howard has a chance—though he'd do better with traditional Texas material. Price *could*, but I don't think he will because commercial writing is "getting" him. Whitehead was on the way—but death got him too soon. As for me—I doubt if I'll ever get much of anywhere. . . .

. . . Thanks immensely for the Idaho views, & for the verbal side-lights on a region my grandfather knew so well. So the old dam wasn't finished till two years ago! The last I knew of the project was in 1904—the year of my grandfather's death. The dam was then washed away, & no one knew when it could be replaced. So much of the enterprise depended on my grandfather personally, that the Owyhee Company eventually went out of existence—at least, as a Rhode Island institution—without attempting to rebuild. Probably the thing was ultimately carried through by a whole new generation of men. The engineer of the original project—in my grandfather's time—was a Mr. Wylie. My uncle Edwin E. Phillips—who died in 1918—was also in the company, & made several trips to Idaho. The beginning of my grandfather's business interest in Idaho was about 1887, & in 1888 he organised (together with his nephew Jeremiah W. Phillips & a group of other Providence men) the Snake River Co., which dealt in land & cattle. Very soon, however, he saw that *irrigation* was the big thing—hence in Oct. 1889 the company was reorganised & reincorporated as a Maine corporation (heaven knows why—the offices & officials were all in Providence!) under the name Owyhee Land & Irrigation Co. My grandfather was General Manager as well as President. It was a tremendous responsibility, & the two successive burstings of the dam virtually wiped

the Phillips family out financially & hastened my grandfather's death—at 70, of apoplexy. But he had a great idea of the future of the Snake River Valley under irrigation, & I always take pleasure in learning of the gradual justification of his hopes. In a way, I think he was rather ahead of his time. He thought of agriculture, fruit-raising, land development, irrigation, &c. on a large scale not very common in the 1890's—and yet nowadays similar projects of the vastest magnitude are springing into existence all over the West. . . .

Yours most sincerely—

H. P. Lovecraft

682. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
Feby. 4, 1934.

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

. . . . . What you say of my epistles—and of the potential essays or articles imbedded in some of them—pleases & flatters me extremely. I dare say that many of my expository or controversial harangues (as well as those of the correspondents at the other end) are equivalent to essays in length & subject-matter—although they have the fatal defects of hasty thought & careless composition. They are, after all, only the random thoughts of a rank layman—not the well-considered utterances of a qualified student of the subjects involved. I used to write articles of all sorts, but in my latter years I have developed a marked distaste for inadequate & ill-informed pamphleteering. Cracker-barrel debating is all well enough for private correspondence—where all hands are laymen—but it makes me rather tired to see a half-baked ordinary guy shooting off his mouth in public on subjects which none but the special student can rightly handle. However—once in a very long while I copy certain definite arguments or expositions from letters I have just written; circulating the copy among other correspondents interested in the same thing or (though less often than 10 or 20 years ago) having it printed in one of the small papers of the "amateur journalistic" circle. In such a case I de-personalise the



text to some extent—separating it from the occasion & context of the original letter & supplying a proper opening & conclusion of the standard essay type. As a typical illustration of this I think I'll enclose an "article" on the American political situation which I copied last November from a letter to a more or less plutocratic correspondent in Chicago—a rather important official in The (ex-Insull) Commonwealth Edison Co. there. This chap—Ernest A. Edkins—is a splendidly witty & civilised character, with fine aesthetic appreciations; but he cannot quite escape the visionless & conventional psychology of the "business-man"—hence is a bitter & apprehensive opponent of the present administration. He & I had been desultorily arguing for some time, but at last I decided to undermine his position in the most thorough way; hence wrote him an enormous letter in an effort to get down to the very roots of the matter. When I had finished, it occurred to me that I'd like to present the same text to many other friends & correspondents—not only reactionaries like Edkins, but wild-eyed bolsheviki like Long, who lean just as absurdly in the opposite direction. Hence I typed an impersonalised version of the crucial argument in my usual way, & have been letting it go the rounds ever since. Just now it is here again, & I believe I'll enclose it to you as a sample of my latter-day "essay-writing". You may or may not agree with the politics—I am for a fascism which includes as much socialisation as may be found necessary for a proper spreading of resources—but at any rate you have a sample of the way an "article" can be made from a letter. (Please return this item.)

..... As for the matter of childhood recollections—of course, such can be made very interesting if one knows how; though there is always a feeling of deficient significance unless the childhood in question be the preface to a fruitful & important adulthood. When the high-flown imaginings of the child peter out in a manhood of mediocrity & non-achievement like mine, there is an ever-present sense of mocking anticlimax which makes formal exploitation subtly ridiculous & out of place. It is all very well for a dull old man to recall his boyhood privately & informally—in correspondence or conversations with friends—but to publish the same material as a conscious literary attempt is quite another matter. Of course, some literary merit might possibly be present—but the sense of anticlimax would always be a vitiating element. Regarding the extent to which recent writers have exploited or neglected the matter of correlation with

the time-stream—I was not thinking of Proust, since I tend to group him within the main tradition rather than among the moderns. Probably no writer has more magnificently captured the sense of time than Proust—there are parts of *Swann's Way* which shew a marvellous identification of the adult with the child. Certainly, I must try to continue my Proustian reading before long . . . . what is the third book of the series—*Cities of the Plain*? I can comprehend Proust's sensations at finding his friends aged after a long absence from them. Only last week my best friend of the early 1900's—Chester Pierce Munroe—turned up in Providence after long years of residence in the south. I had not set eyes on him since 1916 or so, & had seen very little of him since 1912 or 1913. Good god! Was this iron-grey-headed, slightly paunchy middle-aged man (he's one year my senior) the little Chet Munroe of 1902 & 1903? I knew, of course, that I had changed just as much (though I *did* avoid the paunch through my 1925 reducing!)—yet the sudden confrontation with this image, so different from the established Chester-Munroe-image of my subconscious mind, was none the less a shock. Only the *voice* was familiar. That, indeed, was just the same as when it emerged from the changing process around 1905 or '06. The fact is, it has probably aged far *less* than the average voice—for how many men of 44 talk *exactly* as they did in their middle 'teens? Chester's memories of boyhood are very keen, & he could name a very large number of the children in our Slater Ave. class photograph of 1903—including those (a numerical majority) whom he had never seen since then. It is probably true that the period from 7 to 14 produces more lasting impressions than any other. We can, in later life, generally return to childhood more readily than to young manhood. This is one reason why the memories of the very aged usually centre largely around the 10-year-old period—another reason being that the mental structure has in that age generally suffered a letdown to about the 10-year-old level of intellection & emotional sympathy, so that a man of 90 can often understand himself better at 10 than at 20 or 30 or 40. Differences in individual rates of aging—& differences in separate *phases* of aging (hair, face, voice, figure, gestures, intellect, emotions, &c.)—are often very marked, & furnish a highly interesting study. I know men of my own age who could easily pass for sons of mine—& others who look as though they might be my father. It is all a matter of glands—of which time is only a rough measure. . . .

I was greatly interested in your childhood memories, & hope you will some time work them into a novel of retrospective cast. It is curious how juvenile reading has changed—& ironic to reflect that of the books of my period only the very poorest (the Rover Boys' Series) have survived. I suppose this series has been endlessly continued & brought down to date—so that the grandsons of the original Rover Boys are now paralleling their adventures on aëroplanes & submarines & rocket space-ships! Of the newer books you mention I have heard only of the Tom Swift series—rather poor junk according to a friend of mine who deplures his young hopeful's addiction to it. Your early glasses remind me of myself—I wore them at 7, though at many later periods I tried leaving them off, so that today I wear them only for middle-distance vision (theatre, cinema, illustrated lectures, &c.) The ghost stories you heard from other children form an interesting item. I never heard *oral* weird tales except from my grandfather—who, observing my tastes in reading, used to devise all sorts of impromptu original yarns about black woods, unfathomed caves, winged horrors (like the "night-gaunts" of my dreams, about which I used to tell him), old witches with sinister cauldrons, & "deep, low, moaning sounds". He obviously drew most of his imagery from the early gothic romances—Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, &c.—which he seemed to like better than Poe or other later fantaisistes. He was the only other person I knew—young or old—who cared for macabre & horrific fiction.

My first memories are of the summer of 1892—just before my second birthday. We were then vacationing in Dudley, Mass., & I recall the house with its frightful attic water-tank & my rocking-horses at the head of the stairs. I recall also the plank walks laid to facilitate walking in rainy weather—& a wooded ravine, & a boy with a small rifle who let me pull the trigger while my mother held me. At that period my father was alive & in business in Boston, so that our residences were around the Boston suburbs—Dorchester & Auburndale. In the latter place we stayed with my mother's friend, the rather famous poetess Louise Imogen Guiney, pending the construction of a house of our own. That house was never built—for my father was fatally stricken in April 1893, & my mother & I moved back to the old maternal Providence home where I was born. My first *clear & connected* memories centre in Auburndale—the shady streets, the bridge over the 4-tracked B. & A. R. R. with the business section beyond, the Guiney home in Vista Ave.,

the poetess's great St. Bernard dogs, the verse-reciting sessions at which I was made to stand on a table & spout Mother Goose & other infantile classics, the sunsets beyond the trees—& so on. I remembered the place so well that I walked straight to the house from the station when I revisited it in 1908. I can just remember my father—an immaculate figure in black coat & vest & grey striped trousers. I had a childish habit of slapping him on the knees & shouting "Papa, you look just like a young man!" I don't know where I picked that phrase up; but I was vain & self-conscious, & given to repeating things which I saw tickled my elders. I was highly nervous—as restless & fidgety as you were—& distinctly like to "show off". This latter tendency—& the vanity & self-consciousness behind it—later succumbed to good advice & the better perspective of life imparted by reading, though its disappearance was slow & gradual. I first saw a play at the age of 6. Later, when the cinema appeared as a separate institution (it had been part of Keith vaudeville since 1898 or 1899), I attended it often with other fellows, but never took it seriously. By the time of the first cinema shows (March, 1906, in Providence) I knew too much of literature & drama not to recognise the utter & unrelieved hokum of the moving picture. Still, I attended them—in the same spirit that I had read Nick Carter, Old King Brady, & Frank Reade in nickel-novel form. Escape—relaxation. It was not till later that I got fed up & no longer enjoyed such mentally juvenile performances. The earliest "stars" I remember (their names weren't given till about '07 or '08) are Maurice Costello, Henry Walthall, Florence Turner, Hobart Bosworth, &c. . . . I recall many faces, too, without the corresponding names. I think the subsequently famous Mary Pickford didn't appear till '08 or '09. Of stage stars I saw most of the celebrated figures of the late '90's & early 1900's, though I most unfortunately missed Sir Henry Irving. In the matter of the justly celebrated "facts of life" I didn't wait for oral information, but exhausted the entire subject in the medical section of the family library (to which I had access, although I wasn't especially loquacious about this side of my reading) when I was 8 years old—through Quain's Anatomy (fully illustrated & diagrammed), Dunglison's Physiology, &c. &c. This was because of curiosity & perplexity concerning the strange reticences & embarrassments of adult speech, & the oddly inexplicable allusions & situations in standard literature. The result was the very opposite of what parents generally fear—for instead



of giving me an abnormal & precocious interest in sex (as *unsatisfied* curiosity might have done), it virtually killed my interest in the subject. The whole matter was reduced to prosaic mechanism—a mechanism which I rather despised or at least thought non-glamorous because of its purely animal nature & separation from such things as intellect & beauty—and all the drama was taken out of it. When the kids talked or acted dirtily I could have told them more than they tried to tell me—although (such was the state of Victorian formal medicine) my knowledge was restricted wholly to *normal* sex. I was middle-aged & married before I ever knew that there was such a thing as *instinctive* homosexuality—though I suppose there must be dozens of Haldeman-Julius booklets about the matter now. I talked as toughly as anybody else, since I didn't wish to be a sissy; but my real ideals of life always inclined toward the ascetic. I didn't slop over in youthful romance, since I didn't believe—and still don't—in the existence of sentimental “love” as a definite, powerful, or persistent human emotion. I have always regarded marriage as composed of friendly regard, mental congeniality, social foresight, & practical advantage; to which *at first* the element of biological eroticism is added. Later the element of familiar affection & family loyalty develops—if the experiment happens to “take”, as a few seem to do. But my idea of life has always been to depend on the animal & emotional sides—essentially capricious, mutable, & soon exhausted—as little as possible; choosing rather that abstract & contemplative side which involves the independent & permanent elements of reason & imagination. With me, the hardest emotion to bring under the control of reason was hatred—as expressed in berserk rages & general pugnacity. I had some fairly rough fights (from which I would not retreat, but in which I almost always got the worst except when I managed to frighten my foe through a dramatically murderous expression & voice) till I was 16 or 17—but as I grew up my recognition of the deterministic automatism of the whole cosmos, & the ridiculous insignificance & futility of all human actions, gave me an entirely new perspective. I could no longer see anything *personal* or *responsible* in anything that anybody did, & began to look on all mankind as impersonally as one looks on a cage full of monkeys in a zoo. This had the effect of almost deleting the emotion of anger from my personality, & of giving me a philosophic calm I had never possessed before. Today I am extremely tranquil—although of course, as a matter of aesthetics,

I take no actual encroachments from anybody. It is now much easier for me to *despise* or *laugh at* a person or thing than to *hate* him or it. When I fight (& it's years since I've had any physical set-to) it is not from berserk rage, but simply from an English gentleman's instinctive need of personal inviolateness, non-encroachment, & satisfied honour. I pick quarrels with no one—but the Nordic's only possible reply to a real affront is to tell the affronter to go to hell. My first acute realisation of *time* was when I saw newspapers bearing the heavily-inked date-line TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 1895. 1895!! To me the symbol 1894 had represented an eternity—the eternity of *the present* as distinguished from such things as 1066 or 1492 or 1642 or 1776—and the idea of personally outliving that eternity was absorbingly impressive to me, even though I had fully realised, in an abstract way, that I would do so . . . . . that I had been born in 1890 & would probably (in view of the average death-ages of near kinsfolk) live till about 1960. I shall never forget the sensation I derived from the idea of *moving through time* (if forward, why not backward?) which that '95 date-line gave me. But possibly I mentioned this in my previous letter. The one time that I seriously thought of suicide was in & after 1904, when my grandfather died in the midst of business tangles (he was president of a land & irrigation corporation exploiting the Snake River in Idaho, & the total destruction of the dam on which everything depended had caused a frightful situation) & left us all relatively poor. I was (being predominantly geographical-minded) tremendously attached to the old home at 454 Angell St. (now housing 12 physicians' offices—I walk by it still as often as I can) with its grounds & fountain, & stable, but this now had to go . . . . . indeed, there had been drastic economies for 5 years before that. My mother & I moved into a 5-room-&-attic flat two squares farther east (598 Angell St., where I dwelt till 1924) & for the first time I knew what a congested, servantless home—with another family in the same house—was. There was a vacant lot next door (although even that was later built up—during my adulthood), which I promptly exploited as a landscape garden & adorned with a village of piano-box houses, but even that failed to assuage my nostalgia. I felt that I had lost my entire adjustment to the cosmos—for what indeed was HPL without the remembered rooms & hallways & hangings & staircases & statuary & paintings (now—after 30 years of storage—my aunt & I *again* have one of the statues & several of the large paint-

ings, since by a miracle the rooms & hallway of 66 College can accommodate them) & yard & walks & cherry-trees & fountain & ivy-grown arch & stable & gardens & all the rest? How could an old man of 14 (& I surely felt that way!) readjust his existence to a skimpy flat & new household programme & inferior outdoor setting in which almost nothing familiar remained? It seemed like a damned futile business to keep on living. No more tutors—high school next September which would probably be a devilish bore, since one couldn't be as free & easy in high school as one had been during brief snatches at the neighbourly Slater Ave. school. . . . Oh, hell! Why not slough off consciousness altogether? The whole life of man & of the planet was a mere cosmic second—so I couldn't be missing much. The *method* was the only trouble. I didn't like messy exits, & dignified ones were hard to find. Really good poisons were hard to get—those in my chemical laboratory (I reestablished this institution in the basement of the new place) were crude & painful. Bullets were spattery & unreliable. Hanging was ignominious. Daggers were messy unless one could arrange to open a wrist-vein in a bowl of warm water—and even that had its drawbacks despite good Roman precedent. Falls from a cliff were positively vulgar in view of the probable state of the remains. Well—what tempted me most was the warm, shallow, reed-grown Barrington River down the east shore of the bay. I used to go there on my bicycle & look speculatively at it. (That summer I was always on my bicycle—wishing to be away from home as much as possible, since my abode reminded me of the home I had lost.) How easy it would be to wade out among the rushes & lie face down in the warm water till oblivion came. There would be a certain gurgling or choking unpleasantness at first—but it would soon be over. Then the long peaceful night of non-existence . . . what I had enjoyed from the mythical start of eternity till the 20th of August, 1890. More & more I looked at the river on drowsy, sun-golden summer afternoons. I liked to think of the beauty of sun & blue river & green shore & distant white steeple as enfolding me at the last—it would be as if the element of mystical cosmic beauty were dissolving me. And yet certain elements—notably scientific curiosity & a sense of world drama—held me back. Much in the universe baffled me, yet I knew I could pry the answers out of books if I lived & studied longer. Geology, for example. Just *how* did these ancient sediments & stratifications get crystallised & upheaved into granite peaks? Geog-

raphy—just *what* would Scott & Shackleton & Borchgrevink find in the great white antarctic on their next expeditions . . . which I could—if I wished—live to see described? And as to history—as I contemplated an exit without further knowledge I became uncomfortably conscious of what I didn't know. Tantalising gaps existed everywhere. When did people stop speaking Latin & begin to talk Italian & Spanish & French? What on earth ever happened in the black Middle Ages in those parts of the world other than Britain & France (whose story I knew)? What of the vast gulfs of space outside all familiar lands—desert reaches hinted of by Sir John Mandeville & Marco Polo . . . Tartary, Thibet. . . . What of unknown Africa? I knew that many things which were mysteries to me were not such to others. I had not resented my lack of a solution as long as I expected to know *some day*—but now that the idea of *never knowing* presented itself, the circumstance of frustrated curiosity became galling to me. Mathematics, too. Could a gentleman properly die without having demonstrated on paper why the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides? So in the end I decided to postpone my exit till the following summer. I would do a little curiosity-satisfying at first; filling certain gaps of scientific & historical knowledge, & attaining a greater sense of *completeness* before merging with the infinite blackness. Especially would I solve that always-teasing question of how & when "Romans" named *Fabius Anicius* became "Italians" named *Fabio Anizio*. Well—that fall I found high school a delight & stimulus instead of a bore, & the next spring I resumed publication of the *R. I. Journal of Astronomy*, which I had allowed to lapse. Possibly I would wait till '06 before making my exit . . . one could drown in '06 just as well as in '05 or '04! But *new* questions demanding answers were always springing up. First-year *physics* opened problems connected with the nature of visible phenomena & the operation of the universe which my earlier chemistry & astronomy had not even suggested . . . was it possible that educated men knew things about the basic structure of the cosmos which invalidated all my confidently-held concepts? And god! what a surprise *history* was proving! The whole pageantry of the *Byzantine Empire*, & its hostile connexion with that gorgeous Islam which my early Arabian Nights & my later astronomical studies (cf. terms & names like *azimuth*, *zenith*, *Aldebaran*, *almucantar*, *nadir*, *Deneb*, &c.) had made close to me, swept unheralded on my sight—&



for the first time I heard of the lost Minoan culture which Sir Arthur Evans was even then busily digging up in Crete. Assyria & Babylonia, too, stood out with greater impressiveness than ever before—and I heard at last of the eternal query of *Easter Island*. What a world! Why, good god, a man might keep busy forever, even in an uncongenial environment, learning new things . . . pleasantly busy, too, for each new point of satisfied curiosity gave a hell of a kick. Then there was the kick of writing out a mood on paper so that it could be recaptured . . . I had done some experimenting in fictional structure, & achieved a new level of results with *The Beast in the Cave* (ineffably pompous & Johnsonese—I still have it), which I wrote in April '05. Could it be possible that a poor man without servants or a large house & grounds might get a greater satisfaction from remaining alive & studying & writing than from slipping back to primal nescience & molecular dispersal? The matter was worth considering—at least, the end could go over till '06 . . . or very possibly, '07. About then I had a nervous breakdown (winter '05-'06) & had to stay out of school for months, & my lack of energy stopped my even thinking about anything. Then the *Providence Tribune* was founded, & I learned that I had a good chance of breaking into *print* at last . . . contributing monthly astronomical articles just like Prof. Upton's in the *Journal & Bulletin*. One *couldn't* miss a chance like that! Let suicide wait! And the articles landed, & I also landed others with a rural weekly . . . (this was the *Ab, Wilderness* year of '06) . . . & before long I was too busy studying & writing to make any especial plans, lethal or otherwise, for the future. So I've let matters slide for thirty years . . . although I still intend to bump myself off when I get too broke to live on my present reduced scale. But so great is the pleasure of satisfied scientific curiosity & aesthetic experience, that I think a person of tastes like mine is better off (at least slightly) alive than dead as long as he can get his hands on ten bucks a week. That sum will decently house a frugal man & his books & more important pictures & furniture & miscellany—if he can virtually eliminate sartorial replacements (of my 5 suits 3 date from 1925, one from 1928, & the palm beach was given to me!) cut down his food bill to about \$2.50 per week (I do), & do a good part of his own laundry (as I also do). But when I have to sacrifice books & family possessions I shall complete the postponed process of 1904. No use at all in dragging along under *too* inappropriate circumstances. Such, then, is the

history of my own adventures toward self-destruction! As for you—I guess it's just as well that you didn't walk out on the world during the Peabody period. It isn't well to give too many damns about what people think of one. The regard & opinions of others never meant very much to me . . . since (as I said once before) I've always had a subconscious feeling that everything since the 18th century is unreal & illusory—a sort of grotesque nightmare or caricature. People seem to me more or less like ironic shadows or phantoms—as if I could make them (together with all their modern houses & inventions & perspectives) dissolve into thin aether by merely pinching myself awake & shouting at them, "Why, damn ye, you're not even born, & won't be born for a century & a half! God Save the King, & his Colony of Rhode-Island & Providence-Plantations!" Incidentally—the terrific nightmares of my infancy (peopled with black-winged "night-gaunts") probably had something to do with my feeling that I could dismiss all the modern world & its denizens by simply waking myself. In those nightmares I often *knew that I was dreaming*, & strove in every possible way to struggle awake—hence the mental pattern of throwing off a distasteful environment by waking out of it. I still have some tremendously odd dreams—some of which I know to be such. Only last week I had a very curious one about the decay & ruin of the city. I tried to wake, but when I had come out of the dream I felt that *I was not really awake even then*. Something was wrong, even though a bright morning sun was shining on the bed from an east window. Then I realised. *There ought not to be any east window . . .* I was in my old room at 598 Angell St., which I haven't inhabited for ten years! But how could I wake up? After all, *was* I asleep? Was it not possible that everything since early in 1924 was a dream? That I had never left 598—never gone to Brooklyn & Barnes St. & College St. . . . ? But no! Here was the sun *where it hadn't been since 1912 or 1913 . . .* for a house had been built against my windows. I *knew* that. I couldn't swear I had ever lived away from 598, but I knew that my eastern sunlight had been cut off by a new house. And yet, there it blazed! Clearly, I was asleep . . . asleep, & on that unstable plane where anything might happen. Into what vortex of nightmare might I not be pitched without warning at any moment? But how could I escape? Pinching seemed to do no good. And even if I did have another awakening, how could I know that this *second* one would be final? At

last, by a strong mental effort, I made the sunlit room dissolve around me, & emerged into a restful twilight. I stretched in relief . . . & then saw that I was still at 598. My windows were shadowed this time, but the conviction that I no longer lived at 598 was stronger. The chances were about 8 to 2, it seemed to me, that I was still asleep. I shook myself, lifted myself on my elbow, & tried in every way to push myself through another layer of dream. No use. At last a current of cold blackness swept down from somewhere, & I was caught up in a vortex which dissolved all the visible world. Everything melted to chaos, & I soared through endless night against my will. Then hazy outlines began to form—the small panes of an old-fashioned window—daylight—I was at 66 College St.! But was I awake? Here was the sun shining in from the south, & I was in the house I ought to be in . . . but I could not be sure yet. There was an odd aura of doubt which grew & grew—and at last everything dissolved again. No vortex this time, but just a diffusive greyness. And then the outlines of the small-paned window again—this time with only the College St. arc light at the mouth of the court behind it. I shook myself once more, & speculated as to my degree of awakeness. It seemed very doubtful. Still, I might as well test my condition. I rose & turned on the light. 4 a. m. I raised the curtain & looked at the world outside. I went out into the library & to the bathroom, & returned to bed. Still devilish sleepy. Soon I was dreaming of my old home at 454 Angell St. I definitely waked around 8 a. m.—but do not yet know whether I was really awake & up at 4 o'clock. . . .

I perused your cinematic notes with usual interest. During my visit to Long I was dragged to the cinema several times, but the only item worth remembering was a comedy called *Three-Cornered Moon*—a satire on pseudo-aesthetes. At home—and on my own initiative—I saw *Berkeley Square* again . . . incidentally beholding as a companion film the not-half-bad *Wild Boys of the Road* which you mention. Also went to see *The Invisible Man*. Surprisingly good—might easily have been absurd, yet succeeded in being genuinely sinister. Since receiving your letter I have witnessed *The World Changes*—a fine piece of pageantry, though incredibly naive as a drama, & not even rudimentarily comparable to *Cavalcade*. I liked the pioneer period & the momentarily glimpsed horse-car. Also—the 1880-period & 1893 interiors fascinated me, since they were exactly like the houses I knew in my first conscious days.

That parlour where the funeral was held might have been taken out of 454 Angell St. The 1904 scenes were good—costumes accurate, but one detail of grooming wrong. Young sports did *not* grow those little bits of side-whisker seen on the sons as early as '04. That was a fad lasting from '06 or '07 to '10 or so. In '04 the clean shave was universal among everybody under 30. I note what you say concerning the gifted stars of *Henry VIII & Berkeley Square*. If Leslie Howard was in that *Outward Bound* performance of 1924 I certainly must have seen him there. The years seem to have used him kindly since that period. By the way—when I spoke of his accent I did not mean that I had any trouble in *understanding* him. Indeed, no British accent ever gives me trouble, for I have heard lecturers & others from the Mother Land all my life. I merely note a certain difference from Providence speech in some cases. I noticed it especially in Howard because he was supposed to be an American. In Laughton I certainly did not seem to notice it to any such degree—but perhaps that was merely a result of my inattention. I shall probably see *Little Women* sooner or later—though the book bored me to death 35 years ago, & the period is one I abominate. In all the times I've been to Concord (a marvellous repository of colonial relics) I've never visited the Alcott house—which is open as a public museum. Haven't yet seen *The Emperor Jones*—it was here while I was in N. Y. & hasn't returned so far. I shall go when it comes. Sorry you were disappointed. The original play gave me a great kick in 1922 or '23—with a real buck nigger named Charles Gilpin (now dead) in the leading role. Glad you've seen *Berkeley Square* at last. Talman & Long, who saw the play, say that the cinema version is slightly inferior. As you say, there are things about the transferred identities of the two Peters which tend to arouse questions—although the first one that occurred to me was different from yours. My main objection was that a *diary apparently written by a normal 18th century Peter without consciousness of a 20th century personality or awkward position, yet covering the period of the substituted identity*, was left for the modern Peter to inherit & be guided by. How could that be? If during those days in 1784 the visitor at the Pettigrew home was a 20th century invader who knew everything that was going to happen, *then why did he write in his diary as if he were a normal inhabitant of 1784?* Your point, of course, is—*what was the real 18th century Peter doing while the 20th century Peter usurped his body?* I answered



that question in a sketchy sort of way by assuming that he occupied the modern Peter's body in a kind of half-stupor—drinking to drown his perplexity & being regarded by the modern housekeeper (who must have fed him) as her master in a neurotic & alcoholic state. Yet this is clearly a lame explanation. In the case of an actual exchange, the man transported into the unknown future would have had a totally different reaction—and the housekeeper would have noted a multitude of queer things. I did not gather that the subsequent remarks of the housekeeper to the modern fiancée referred to the period when the 18th century Peter was in the modern body. One of the things reported was a wild speech in which the speaker told some people (as I often feel!) that they wouldn't be born for over a century. Now how could the 18th century Peter, in the confusion of his plight, have known just what had happened? Or—assuming he had kept his head & studied calendars & newspapers in the house—would he have taken the matter in just this way? Also—the master is spoken of as having tried to force his way into White's as a member. Presumably in modern dress—yet how could the 18th century Peter (catapulted into a dressing-gowned body in the 20th century) have dressed himself in the correct modern fashion unassisted? No—in my opinion all this talk of the housekeeper referred to the 20th century Peter after his return with shattered nerves & a mind filled with 18th century images & doubts of his fixed place in the time-stream. Think this over & see if you don't agree with me. But your point is extremely just—what, indeed, was the 18th century Peter doing during the substitution period? This is no more cleared up than the matter of the diary—a plain oversight on the author's part. Also—when the real 18th century Peter got back to 1784 his diary ought to shew some trace of whatever unprecedented experience he had been through. But with all its defects this thing gave me an uncanny wallop. When I revisited it I saw it through twice—and I shall probably go again on its next return. It is the most weirdly perfect embodiment of my own moods & pseudo-memories that I have ever seen—for all my life I have felt as if I might wake up out of this dream of an idiotic Victorian age & an insane jazz age into the same reality of 1760 or 1770 or 1780 . . . . the age of the white steeples & fanlighted doorways of the ancient hill, & of the long-s'd books of the old dark attic trunk-room at 454 Angell St. God Save the King! . . . . .

What you say of *Bedelia* explains the mystery of its date & fully vindicates the reminiscent accuracy of O'Neill. For what you cite is not the original song itself, but merely an obscene or suggestive parody of it—the sort of thing which might easily linger on as a vulgar comic feature for years after the real song had become a joke. Such obscene parodies were very common in the old days (are they now?)—almost every supreme hit having one. I never heard this specimen before, but recall smutty versions of *In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree* (1905), *On a Sunday Afternoon* (1902), & others. Here is the real text of *Bedelia* as published in 1903 & popularised by the comedienne Blanche Ring:

*There's a charming Irish lady with a roguish winning way,  
Who has kept my heart a-thumping & a-bumping night & day;  
She's the flower of Killarney, with a Tipperary smile—  
She's the best that ever came from Erin's Isle  
And I find myself a-singing all the while:*

(Chorus)

*Bedelia, I'd like to steal you,*

*Bedelia, I love you so.*

*I'll be your Chauncey Olcott,*

*If you'll be my Molly O;*

*Say something sweet, Bedelia;*

*Your voice I like to hear.*

*Oh, Bedelia—elia—elia, I've made up my mind to steal you,*

*Steal you, steal you,*

*Bedelia dear!*

In this wholly innocuous original form *Bedelia* was a veritable knock-out—a stampede—lasting well into 1904. I remember my little cousin Phillips Gamwell (now dead—his mother is the aunt now heading my household) singing it at the age of six. But by the fall of '04 it was played out as a serious offering. After that—like *On the Banks of the Wabash*—it became a typical back number, for humorous or parodic use. *You're the Flower of My Heart, Sweet Adeline* (Spring '04) was its principal immediate successor in popular favour—and then in '05 the new riot—*In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree* appeared. But of course

the crude parodies hung on indefinitely in the underworld, so that a vulgarised pseudo-*Bedelia* in 1906 is no anachronism. I note with amusement the specimen of modern song-verse you cite. Evidently the trade of lyric-grinding is much the same, qualitatively speaking, from decade to decade! Your synthetic specimens for *Posturings* are delightfully characteristic of the genre—you catch exactly the right note of banality!

Regarding the question of war & peace—the trouble with the pacifists who would fight only to defend their country is that they are unwilling to sanction such a course of rational preparedness as would make a real defence possible. National emergencies rise suddenly; & unless a sizeable body of trained men with proper equipment is available, there is no way of meeting such a thing. Certainly, all effort ought to be made to prevent an abuse or over-extension of the term defensive—but at the same time universal military training ought to prevail in order to make defence effective when it is genuinely needed. Opinions may differ regarding the last war, but it seems to me that anyone with any sense of historic values ought to see how necessary it was to prevent the sweeping victory of Germany. Knowing the German spirit, one may conjecture what the positions of the non-Germanic nations would have been in a world of dominant Prussianism & vindicated militarism. There is everything to regret in the original precipitation of the war in 1914, but nothing to regret in America's turning the scales in 1917-18. America got off easy—her position in a Germanic world would have been utterly intolerable by comparison. As for Japan—it is possible that good diplomacy could avert a clash, though whether such diplomacy can be found is another question. Actually, Japan ought to be given a free hand in all the Far East—with the understanding that hands are to be kept off the rest. A lot of mawkish sympathy is wasted on China. She has, of course, a mighty civilisation—but the capacity for self-government is lacking. Her only stable rule in recent—and even mediaeval—times has been from alien dynasties of conquerors—Tartars or Manchus. In the near future either Japan or bolshevik Russia will certainly control the bulk of the Chinese Empire—and I'd rather see Japan do it than have the Soviets extend their influence. So my idea is to let Japan alone in Asia. I suppose the great fear is that Japan could become absolutely invincible—able to subdue all the combined forces which

could possibly be brought against her—if China's boundless population & resources were at her disposal. There is perhaps good sense in that fear—who can tell?

..... Regarding *inevitability*—that is an over-coloured & exaggerated expression. Nothing in human life is really inevitable except as ultimate cosmic determinism (which we can never map out) makes it so. Human behaviour is infinitely complex, varied, & unpredictable, & in a given general situation a man of a certain type (so far as we can distinguish types) may act in any number of ways, depending on minute & imperceptible details in the situation & in his own composition. Calverton has the false notion of inevitable human reactions which goes with the crazy Marxian philosophy & the half-baked theories of behaviourism. Regarding *descriptions* & *elegance* there's nothing to object to. But I dissent from the point regarding a *philosophy of life*. That's some more of the bolshevistic bunk. Actually the only business of an artist is to express what he sees & feels, without any attempt at intellectual correlation. Usually the artist has a sort of perspective which may or may not crop out here & there—but the more he forgets about it, the better. Let the author present life itself—it is for each reader to draw philosophic conclusions, as he would from first-hand experience. Proust is right in saying that theories in a book are like a price-tag left on a pair of pants! Calverton's last conclusion—about emotional effect & the human desire for projection—seems very sound. I read some of the Eastman papers in *Helopeltis* a couple of years ago. There is something in what he says—for when a poet gets too subjective & individual he certainly ceases to have a message for anybody else. Poor Hart Crane (his mother, now visibly an old lady, was at Loveman's New Year gathering) probably justified Eastman's strictures.

Regarding the so-called Scottsboro case—it would certainly seem as if the defence had quite a bit of evidence (though I don't see what the possession of syphilis & gonorrhea by one nigger had to do with it—these things don't destroy the inclination to ravish so far as I know) . . . yet all this must have been well known to jurors who maturely brought in a verdict of guilty. It doesn't seem natural to me that well-disposed men would deliberately condemn even niggers to death if they were not strongly convinced of guilt. We must not forget that these



books of special pleading are compiled & coloured by professional radicals & emotional idealists—although of course prejudice & emotion exist on the other side as well. It would probably be better if all trials involving local prejudice could be conducted by Federal courts with a personnel drawn from all parts of the country—avoiding not only the sections where prejudice *against* the defendants exists, but those where prejudice *in their favour* is found. For instance—no jury of New York Jewish radicals ought to try a man accused of labour crimes against law & order . . . for those bastards would acquit a brute who had shot up dozens of innocent people if they thought he did it “for the social revolution”. Just how the present *cause célèbre* will come out, I don’t know—but possibly some sort of commutation of sentence will occur at the last moment. However—the damn coons are probably rather poor specimens anyhow, so that apart from the matter of precedent it really matters little whether they are bumped off or not. It is curious to analyse the system of values which, in the absence of religious belief, attaches such exaggerated importance to the sanctity of human life *as such*, & to the finely-spun abstractions of “justice” & kindred illusions or aesthetic concepts. Of course, there is an artistic side of the matter—needless cruelty being essentially vulgar—but I suspect that much of the hysterical justice-crying of radicals & idealists is simply an emotional residue from religion. My own policy would be to safeguard human life & the aesthetic ornament called “justice” *as far as is compatible with more important social & cultural necessities* such as racial & national safety, the maintenance of intellectual & artistic standards, the welfare of superior types, & so on. *Wanton* cruelty or injustice is indeed crude—but it is silly to let an exaggerated humanity interfere with the really best interests of the group & its development. There is something hollow & feminine about the position of the extreme idealist. What we need is reason, realism, moderation, & a sense of proportion. As for old Steffens—who shews an amusing inability to break away from the abstract ethical concept—what he says of Rhode Island state politics is probably correct. The standard of political action in the state government (though this does *not* apply to the Providence city government) has always been very cynical & realistic, & free from aesthetic modulations or ethical pretences. However, since this is a condition well understood & allowed for, it has never caused much harm. We may say merely that the political game is played according to a different set

of rules. Both parties are equally unscrupulous, & the peculations from the public are no greater than what occur under virtually any system. Corrupt politics are necessary in a nominal democracy, since only through boss-ism can anything ever be accomplished. The only real remedy is a fascistic & highly centralised government administered by specially trained men—these in turn elected only by such persons as can pass a stiff intelligence test & an exacting series of examinations in political, economic, administrative, & general cultural subjects.

What you say of the Coates book interests me considerably, since I met the author ten years ago—when he was an unknown newspaper man. He is a red-headed, pleasant chap—perhaps slightly my junior. We were both doing some hack work for that damned cuss Henneberger, who controlled *W. T.* during the pre-Wright period, & I met him in Henneberger’s suite at the Hotel Empire in N. Y. Another participant in that meeting was the old-time wit & columnist La Touche Hancock (once a shining light on the old *N. Y. Sun*), who eventually drank himself to death. Poor old devil—even then he was pretty far on the down grade . . . doing work for a Coney Island local weekly. Coates interested me because he seemed to share my antiquarian tastes. I was then giving New York City an intensive historical & architectural exploration, & he gave me tips on several quaint byways I would otherwise have missed. At that time he was leaving for Europe, & I meant to look him up when he got back—but after the exchange of one or two letters he dropped out of sight, & I did not bother to ferret him out. However, I’ve followed his career with interest. One of his books—*The Outlaw Years*—reflects the antiquarianism of ’24.

..... Concerning dialect—is it merely a stenographic slip which makes you refer to the Novanglian use of “frying-pan for spider”? Actually, of course, the case is the precise reverse—the name *spider* being applied to frying-pan. This is exceedingly common & universal—not at all confined to the lower orders. It was only in recent months that I learned that frying-pans are not everywhere called “spiders”. It is probable that this name was derived from a certain old-fashioned type of frying-pan which stood on three legs over a fire, & which thus had something of the aspect of an actual arachnid. The transfer of the term to legless frying-pans held in the hand was of course easy. In New York & (I think) in the middle states—perhaps Pittsburgh—the term *skillet* is common. Perhaps you don’t

realise that this was originally applied not to frying pans but to shallow vessels with long handles used for heating water. The similar shape of the legless frying-pan was what caused this transfer of meaning. Phelps's article on British & American pronunciations is of especial interest to me in view of the lecture (*Is Progress a Delusion?*) by Prof. C. E. M. Joad which I heard last week, & which involved as thick an Oxford accent as I've encountered in a long while. At the same time it must be remembered that the British usages which Phelps cites are *by no means universal or even preferred forms in England*. The real fact is simply *that in Great Britain there exist a wider range of tolerated pronunciations than in the United States*; some being in no way different from American pronunciations, whilst others involve the peculiarities commonly known as "Oxford English". The King does not use this Oxford drawl—in fact, I couldn't tell from his radio speech that he wasn't born & bred in Providence. What is more—Stormonth's *Dictionary* (British—by a Cambridge man—esteemed as a conservative authority & used by my father) refuses to sanction a large number of Oxfordisms. According to the *best* British usage *doctrinal* & *capitalist* are pronounced precisely as in America. I've heard *la-bor'-a-try* (pretty close to Phelps's *la-boh'-o-try*), but this is not the preferred British form. Stormonth favours *lab'-o-ra-ter-y*—which has as many syllables as the American form, though the penultimate vowel has an *e* instead of *o* sound. Occasionally this condenses into the tri-syllable *lab'-ra-try*. As for *fracas*—how the hell does Billy Phelps pronounce it? The only way I ever heard was *frab-kab'*—following the original French usage. This of course fails to make a perfect rhyme with *darker* because the accent is on the last syllable. The word *lieutenant* had the *f* sound in America till about a century ago. I don't sound the final *t* of the French word *trait*, although I hear some doing it. In Rhode Island the pronunciation of the surname Berkeley depends on how it is used. If we speak of George Berkeley, Dean of Derry & Bishop of Cloyne, who lived in this colony from 1729 to 1732, we use the form *he* used—*Bark'ly*. Also, this form in referring to Berkeley Square in London. But through local corruption we speak of *Birk'ly* Street in Boston. Also "Dirby" St. in Salem, though in speaking of the Earl of Derby (& sometimes of the "derby" hat) we say "Darby". The famous horse-race is also called "Darby" in Rhode Island. We generally follow the provincial form in saying *clerk* ("clirk"). Phelps is right in pointing out the

vowel *o* as the chief point of Anglo-Saxon difference. British usage makes a curious *eo* or *eow* pseudo-diphthong of this vowel. Much of the "Oxford accent" is probably of surprising recency—perhaps not going much behind the early 19th century. What I call the *real mainstream* is a certain plain, straightforward mode of speech which can still be used unmodified in London, Boston, Providence, & Charleston without attracting any particular attention. ....

Yr obt grandsire—  
E'ch-Pi-El

683. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Feby. 6, 1934.

Dear Helen:—

..... Thanksgiving I did something I have been wanting to do all my life—consumed the traditional feast on the historic soil of ancient *Plymouth* (less than 40 miles from here), where the whole custom started 312 years ago. The day was miraculously warm—up to 68° in the afternoon—& I spent it all in the venerable Pilgrim town, going over all the familiar sights & unearthing many new ones. I will enclose a couple of cards illustrating the pilgrimage. Plymouth has an atmosphere all its own, & its extreme age never ceases to arouse reflection. In what a wilderness did it take root in 1620! There was then nothing north of it save the straggling town of Quebec on & under its beetling cliff, the lesser hamlets of Tadoussac on the St. Lawrence & Port Royal in Acadia, & the fortress & trading-post of Pentagoët in what is now Maine. West & south only the mysterious black woods with their unknown savages till the tiny Dutch trading post (not yet the town of New-Amsterdam) on Manhattan Island was reached. Then the wilderness again down to the banks of the James—where lay the nearest settlement of our own people—the dominion of Virginia, only 13 years old. Below that another stretch with only the moss-grown foundation-walls of ruined Huguenot houses along salt inlets till one came to the frowning walls of Spanish San Augustin



..... 55 years old, & having many houses which still survive in this year of 1934. A new & unspoiled world—& look at the mess its later inhabitants have made of it!

..... Your early glimpse of the now famous Ruth Slenzki (however it's spelt) is certainly vastly interesting to look back upon. Such a Spartan regimen as that imposed upon her seems barbarous & pathetic even in view of the present brilliant results. Surely, musical genius is not so frail & uncertain a thing that it must needs be forced in infancy at the expense of normal childhood enjoyment & leisure. It seems to me that a slower training, with rational vocational intervals, would have produced just as much in the end, even though such early proficiency might not have been attained. But of course one can't be positive about such matters. I certainly hope I shall have an opportunity to hear her at her present stage—though of course my unmusical ear would be deaf to much of the subtle & unique charm of the rendition. As coincidence would have it, one of my correspondents has lately heard her playing for the first time—over the radio—& writes in the same mood of astonished enthusiasm which seems to have characterised both yourself & the newspaper critics. Unspoiled youth—sincere & free from self-consciousness & acquired mannerisms—certainly has a vast advantage over jaded maturity in the practice of any art; but music is the only form of expression which can be fully mastered while the mind is still unspoiled. It would be assuming a good deal gratuitously to say that such examples of childhood beauty-creation argue the existence of a "higher power," but we surely must marvel at the rare cases in which a discriminating sensitiveness to harmonic rhythms & basic human moods develops instinctively in very early life. Of course, all genius is very largely a matter of unusual natural development, whether it occur early or late. Mere talent can indeed be sharpened by hard work; but the poignant & special aptitude which goes beyond mere talent & draws on the subconscious is a biological, innate matter. It can't be governed from outside, & we are unable to formulate any set of laws to explain or measure it. Its very essence is irregularity.

Abruptly descending in the scale of values—I doubt very much whether music could have been my primary mode of expression. Possibly I would not have reacted so violently against its higher manifestations if my childhood lessons had been less academic, & on a more elementary instrument, yet after all no real musician could ever have



Robert H. Barlow

been scared off as I was. Moreover—if I had any innate taste I would not enjoy cheap tunes . . . as I frankly & unashamedly do. I can understand a thwarted musician's caring for *no* melodies at all—but I can hardly picture him with a gang of fellows whistling or howling the tin-pan ditties of the period with overt & genuine gusto, as Grandpa E'ch-Pi-El must confess to having done in the lost golden days of '06 & thereabouts! It took the bizarre & nondescript tonal & rhythmical hashes of post-war jazz to get me disgusted with popular ballads—and even now I relish the old-time inanities when they are revived on the *radio* . . . though this may be merely because they recall the lost illusions & optimisms of the youthful period when I first knew & ululated them.

Regarding *The Hill of Dreams*—I could almost guarantee that your second perusal will reveal subtleties of beauty & pathos which the first juvenile skimming left hidden. Of course any such cerebral & emotional history drags at times—but the whole thing is a tremendously poignant chronicle of aesthetic sensitiveness & the desperate struggle for adequate expression. No one who has reacted strongly to the beauty & mystery of the external world, & then failed utterly to capture his profound, complex, many-unnamed, & mistily-outlined impression in the words or pigments or tones of his chosen medium, can fail to see himself potently mirrored in many aspects of Lucian Taylor's life & character. Early in the novel the crux of the matter is summed up in plain words:

*He wrote & planned & filled the waste-paper basket with hopeless efforts. . . . There was enough of difficulty to appal; from following the intricate course of little nameless brooks, from hushed twilight woods, from the vision of the mountains, & the breath of the great wind, passing from deep to deep, he would come home filled with thoughts & emotions, mystic fancies which he yearned to translate into the written word. And the result of the effort seemed always to be bathos! Wooden sentences, a portentous, stilled style, obscurity, & awkwardness clogged his pen; it seemed impossible to win the great secret of language; the stars glittered only in the darkness, & vanished away in clearer light. The periods of despair were often long & heavy, the victories very few & trifling; night after night he sat writing after his father had knocked out his last pipe, filling a page with difficulty in an*



Helen V. Sully



hour, & usually forced to thrust the stuff away in despair, & go unhappily to bed, conscious that after all his labour he had done nothing. And there were moments when the accustomed vision of the land alarmed him, & the wild domed hills & darkling woods seemed symbols of some terrible secret in the inner life of that stranger—himself.

Ever since reading this book—in 1923—I have longed to see the strange & haunted region—Caerleon-on-Usk, the ancient Isca Silurum of the Second Augustan Legion in Roman days—which it reflects, & which was the boyhood environment of Arthur Machen. Just recently I secured Weigall's *Wanderings in Roman Britain*, & therein found all my tantalising impressions confirmed. It appears that within the last decade the long-buried Caerleon amphitheatre has been unearthed—& found to be in almost perfect condition after its long centuries of oblivion. The Second Legion was at Isca from 78 to 368 A. D.—it then being transferred to the east coast to guard against the ever-increasing menace of the Saxons. Weigall's book makes Lucian's Roman dream-life (H. of D. Ch. IV) stand out with doubled vividness.

Yr most obt. hbl. Servt  
HPL

684. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

At the Monolith on the Mound  
—Hour that the Dogs Howl.  
(circa February 10, 1934)

O Floridian More Fortunate than you Can Realise:—

I write from the captivity to which the Frost-Daemon has consigned me during the worst cold spell in the history of Providence! The minimum so far has been 17 below zero—by far the lowest figure ever recorded by the local weather bureau, the nearest approach having been during the memorable and terrible winter of 1917-1918. It is really quite unlikely that anything so bad has occurred here since the traditional arctic season of 1778-79, when Narragansett Bay was frozen over, and the Royal troops at Newport nearly perished of cold—notwithstanding that most were Hessians, used to the frigid winters of

interior Germany. They had to cut down virtually all the neighbouring woods and even tear down old houses to get fuel enough to keep alive—and if this present spell keeps up, I fancy some communities may have to do the same thing! Of course, this would be considered nothing up in Vermont or in Quebec—but Rhode Island isn't used to it, hence feels it acutely when it does come once in a while. Of course, I can't go out at all—for 20 above is the lowest temperature at which it's physically safe for me to be out for any length of time. Very fortunately this house—heated with steam piped from the Engineering Bldg. of Brown University—can be kept at a tropical temperature 24 hours a day, my room being 87° at the present moment. I don't know when this epistle will get mailed, for even my aunt (usually a regular cold-weather shark) shuns the polar waste beyond the front door. But perhaps an accommodating guest, postman, or delivery-man will consent to transmit material to the outside world.

All good wishes—yr. most obt. hble. Servt.  
ech-pi-el

685. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

At the Monolith on the Mound—  
Hour that the Dogs Howl  
Feb. 11, 1934

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

That Weigall book—to the thorough reading of which I couldn't get around till a couple of weeks ago—was a veritable treasure-house of data anent a Britain whose life and splendours most have forgotten. As fascinated as I have always been by Roman Britain (one of my great controversies of 20 years ago was with a chap who claimed that Roman civilisation and the Latin language never had any foothold in Britain outside the camps and large towns—gad, but I wish I'd had Weigall to quote then!), I never before realised how utterly and stably Roman a province it was, and how many tangible reliques still survive from the past. Think of arches and walls and towers still surviving, *which were*

a thousand years old when William the Conqueror landed! Of course such things are scattered, and in some cases only lately exhumed—or distinguished from mediaeval masonry—but they are there! The description of the Arthur Machen country—Caerleon-on-Usk is fascinating. That amphitheatre described in the Roman dream chapter of *The Hill of Dreams* has been dug out of its covering mound during the last decade, and now stands almost as it was when built by the Second Augustan Legion under Sextus Julius Frontinus in A. D. 78—before the destruction of Pompeii in the home land. Its condition is so perfect that it probably forms the finest Roman amphitheatre now existing—in better shape than the Colosseum, though of course not even comparable in size. . . . .

I was extremely fascinated by your description of your feline colleagues, and wish that I might see pictures of the nighted and saturnine Simaetha and the bluff and bellicose Genl. Tabasco. Simaetha would surely seem to be a true heir to the most sorcerous traditions of Hyperborea and Regio Averonum—not unlike those reputedly immortal felines who guarded the shrine of Sadoqua, and whose regular disappearances at New Moon figure so largely in the folklore of mediaeval Averaigne. One recalls the disquieting suggestions in Jehan d'Arbois' *Roman des Sorciers* concerning the huge black cats captured at those very singular Sabbats on the rocky hill behind Vyones—the cats which could not be burned, but which escaped unhurt from the flames, uttering cries which, though not like any known human speech, were damnable close to the unknown syllables forming part of the Tsath-ritual in the *Livre d'Eibon*. Here on the ancient hill, as I may have mentioned, I am in close touch with the secret and portentous Kappa Alpha Tau (Καμψὼν Ἀιλούρων Τάξις) fraternity which meets on the roof of a shed across the garden beneath my west window. The president, Peter Randall, is an elderly black and white gentleman of aristocratic and sacerdotal descent, who inherits the darkest arcana of Bubastis and Meroë. Like me, he's no lover of cold weather, but appears at the club only when climatic conditions are favourable. His aloofness from ordinary mortals both human and feline is proverbial, but he has at last permitted me to break through his reserve, so that he now even rolls over in an undignified and kittenish fashion when he sees Grandpa E'ch-Pi-El approaching. The Vice-President, Count Magnus Osterberg (belonging to a Scandinavian household in Waterman Street), is a huge

and handsome tiger with a white face and gloves and boots, whose aristocratic reserve is quite equal to Pres. Randall's. He and Peter are very close friends, but neither ever pays the slightest attention to any other feline. When one is out alone, he always looks about for the other; and when they have found each other they generally take up permanent stations about two feet apart—dozing, surveying the semi-rural scenery of their back-garden oasis, or exchanging courteous and affable glances. Casual approaches of other cats are unheeded, but when any outside Grimalkin becomes actually obtrusive and overbearing (no cat of K. A. T. calibre *would* become so!), Count Magnus displays the hardier side of his nature. (Pres. Randall has outlived his combative years, hence repels foes only with chilling glances.) Magnus never *picks* a fight, and often goes to considerable lengths of tact to avert a vulgar brawl—but when the other guy becomes insistent, so that a gentleman must either fight or bear the imputation of tarnished honour, then just watch the scion of the ancient Osterberg line! All the hardy blood of generations of Norrland jarls, and all the cryptic lore learnt from the Lapps and Finnish warlocks, then comes to the fore—and the fur that flies during the ensuing moments is not often the tiger-and-white mini-ver of Count Magnus Osterberg! Just as I have never seen Count Magnus provoke or invite a combat, so have I never seen him retreat. A true gentleman and Nordic nobleman, by Gad! Both Pres. Randall and Vice Pres. Osterberg have their favourite spots for taking the air—the President favouring the clubhouse roof (which is in his yard) and Count Magnus his own back fence, slightly to the north. Each, however, is very courteous about transferring the seat of a colloquy to the other's chosen territory. As for the others—the secretary is a large Maltese, recently elected to replace a grey part-Angora who has withdrawn from the fraternity. The Treasurer—Stephen Randall, who looks enough like Peter to be his son, though he has no white spot on the end of his tail—is also newly chosen, supplanting a small tiger who resigned. Other members are a titanic coal-black warrior with a stentorian voice, a pale yellow gentleman of fairly martial tastes, an exceedingly handsome double-pawed tortoise-shell, and a large, pale tiger—tolerated more or less on probation. When four or five are assembled on the clubhouse roof beneath my window, the effect is the most companionable kind of thing imaginable. Count Magnus, moreover, sometimes honours this household with a visit. Of other local felidae—non-members of the



Kappa Alpha Tau—one may mention the white and black huntress at the boarding-house across the back garden, who is my aunt's especial favourite. Last summer, after some of her own kittens were eliminated by the local Nazi committee which decided they didn't come up to the best Aryan standard, she adopted two exquisite little tigers with unopened eyes from some unknown source and proceeded to rear them with scientific solicitude. One was later given away to appreciative owners, but the other (an utterly fascinating and incredibly companionable little rascal) became my most frequent visitor and constant playmate. Because of his sprightly, insolent precocity I called him *Alfred Galpin* after our iconoclastic young friend . . . and how he did climb over my desk and chair and shoulders and all the surrounding points of vantage . . . threading his way over tables and among ornaments without ever breaking a thing! But alas! One sad day in mid-December he failed to appear in his wonted haunts, and he has never since been seen. All mourn his absence—and try to picture him as the recipient of some kindly rather than tragic fate. Perhaps he skipped and sidled toward one of our glorious hillside sunsets and passed into the fourth dimension, there to remain as an acolyte of the panther-god Hra in the City of Never, always as young as on the day he came. But it was a blow to the K. A. T. to lose so promising a future member. Count Magnus has vowed vengeance upon any Entity responsible for the disappearance!

Yrs. for Silvanus Cocidius and the  
Secret Altar of Mona—  
E'ch-Pi-El

686. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Feby. 12, 1934

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Yes—my trip certainly did contain an unusual number of points of varied interest. No—the art of the younger Wandrei cannot be said to be basically modern. He is at bottom a traditionalist of the main line;

& his fantastic conceptions suggest Beardsley, Doré, John Martin, Rops, Goya, Fuseli, & other elder masters at the same time that they also embody a strongly original vision & execution. He never employs the modern geometrical conceptions of form, or the attempt to visualise abstractions. What he draws are delirious horrors that one might see if they existed. There is a certain amount of conventionalism & decorativeness, of course, but in general the semblance of natural proportions remains. The power & technique of the drawings are marvellous—and there can be no question of their creator's brilliant future.

I enjoyed that Poe ceremony very much, & especially appreciated Phelps' reference to *Anthony Adverse* because somebody has just lent me that prodigious tome! I own Hervey Allen's life of Poe, which is the best yet published. Allen is also a splendid poet, as you doubtless know.

All good wishes—

Yr obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

687. TO F. LEE BALDWIN

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Feby. 13, 1934

Dear Mr. Baldwin:—

. . . I'd like to see the Northwest some time—not only Idaho but the coast. When I was a small boy I read the juvenile novel *Rick Dale*, by Kirk Munroe (a boys' author almost forgotten now), & some of the most interesting parts dealt with Seattle & Puget Sound—then barely past the boom or late-pioneering stage. The region seemed very fascinating to me, & I longed for visit it. Seattle was also mentioned very often in Munroe's Alaskan stories—*The Fur Seal's Tooth & Snow Shoes & Sledges*. Alaska also captivated my imagination—all the more so because my constitution could never endure cold (I can't go out when it's under 20°). The idea of people actually keeping alive in the arctic region of the Yukon seemed so strange to me that the whole subject of Alaska took on the overtones of mystery and glamour in my mind. I hope you'll be able to get in on some of the exotic expeditions which

beckon you. If I were more used to roughing it, I'd like to participate in some archeological venture in Africa, Central America, or the Amazon Valley. I am especially fitted for the tropics, since I don't know what it is to feel too warm. . . .

As for myself—I was born on August 20, 1890, about a mile east of where I live now. My home was then near the edge of the thickly-built district, so that my childish memories cling round rural scenes—fields, woods, farms, brooks, ravines, & the broad Seekonk River with its high wooded banks—as much as they do around urban scenes. The houses in that part of town were only about 30 years old or less, but I used to be fascinated by the ancient houses in the hill section where I now live. *Old* things always impressed me—& when I discovered the very ancient books of the family library in a dark attic room, I read them more than any others. That is how I came to be so familiar with the different sorts of old-fashioned typography. Everything mysterious & fantastic also impressed me—I loved to hear fairy-tales & ghost & witch stories—which latter my grandfather used to tell me. When I began to read at the age of 4, Grimm's *Fairy Tales* & the *Arabian Nights* were among the first things I seized on. Later I came across simple books about Greek & Roman mythology, & was still more fascinated by them. When I was 8, I began to take an interest in science—first chemistry (I had a small laboratory in the cellar) & later geography, astronomy, & other subjects—but my liking for myths & mystery never decreased. I first tried writing at 6, & the earliest story I can remember was written at 7—something about a cave of robbers called *The Noble Eavesdropper*. At 8 I wrote many crude tales (frightfully crude!), two of which—*The Mysterious Ship* & *The Secret of the Grave* I still have. I also wrote reams of verse, the rules for which I learned from an old book published in 1797. My style in both prose & verse was very old-fashioned, for I always felt a strange kinship with the 18th century—the age of the old books & the old houses I loved. I also felt a strong affinity for ancient Rome. All this time I had a very free hand in choosing my pursuits, since ill health kept me from school much of the time. I had many nervous breakdowns, & in the end was unable to attend college—indeed, my health was never any good till I was 30 years old. I was about 8 or 9 when I first got hold of Poe & adopted him as a model. Virtually all my tales were weird—for nothing has ever fascinated me half so much as the mystery of time & space &

the unknown . . . though I have not believed in religion or any form of the supernatural since I was 8. Remote and inaccessible places like the antarctic & other worlds enthralled my imagination. Astronomy in particular attracted me—I had (& still have) a good small telescope, & when 13 began to edit & publish a little astronomical magazine—*The R. I. Journal of Astronomy*—on a hectograph. When I was 16, & in high school, I broke into print for the first time—with a monthly article on astronomical phenomena in a newly-founded local daily, & with other astronomical articles in the rural press. At 18 I became dissatisfied with all my fiction, & destroyed most of the tales I had written. About that time I turned exclusively to verse, essays, & criticism, & did not write another tale for 9 years. My health was so poor that I led a very inactive life—travelling not at all, & being quite a hermit—though I always managed to get out to the country (mostly on a bicycle) on fine summer afternoons. In 1914 I joined one of the nationwide amateur press associations which are so helpful to isolated literary beginners, & was brought into contact with many capable writers who helped to check certain oddities in my style & to redirect my attention to the weird fiction which must always constitute my major form of self-expression. I began my new series of weird tales in 1917—with *The Tomb & Dagon*. In 1918 I wrote *Polaris*, & in 1919 *Beyond the Wall of Sleep*. There was then no thought of *professionally* publishing these things, though a few appeared in the amateur press. Late in 1919 I first encountered the work of Dunsany, which influenced me profoundly & awaked me to a period of intensive production never paralleled before or since. In 1923 the discovery of Arthur Machen further stimulated my imagination. Meanwhile—after 1920—my health began very gradually to improve. I became less of a hermit, tried my hand at travelling (New Hampshire 1921, New York & Cleveland 1922), & began the intensive exploration of other old towns than Providence. (Salem, Marblehead, &c—which became reflected in my tales as "Arkham" & "Kingsport".) In 1922 I first had a story professionally published—in a small magazine called *Home Brew*, edited by one of the amateur press association members. This was the very poor *Herbert West—Reanimator*—a series of six separate episodes presented in instalments. Later that year the same magazine published my *Lurking Fear* (afterward reprinted by *W. T.*) as a 4-part serial with illustrations by Clark Ashton Smith—whom I had also met through the amateur asso-



ciation. In 1923 *W. T.* was founded, & at Smith's urging I sent in 7 stories for consideration. All were accepted—Edwin Baird, more favourable to me than Wright, then being editor—& publication began in October with *Dagon*. From then on I have been having things in *W. T.* I soon encouraged my young friend Frank B. Long (also met in amateur journalism) to contribute—his first tale appearing late in 1924. About this time my increasing health caused me to branch out in the world more than formerly—even to the point of attempting residence in New York, where most of my friends happen to be—but this programme did not prove satisfactory. I grew to hate the metropolis—& in 1926 returned home for good. However, my travelling proclivities continued, & I have been constantly pushing my limits of exploration both north & south. In 1924 I reached Philadelphia; in 1925 Washington & northern Virginia; in 1927 Portland, Maine & southern Vermont; in 1928 more of Vermont, the Mohawk Trail, Albany, Baltimore, Annapolis, Washington again, & the Endless Caverns in western Virginia (my first glimpse of the marvellous underground world); in 1929 Kingston & other historic N. Y. spots, Richmond, Williamsburg, Jamestown, & Yorktown in Virginia; in 1930 Charleston on the south & Quebec on the north; in 1931 the whole of Florida, even Key West; & in 1932 Chattanooga, Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, New Orleans, & Mobile. Declining finances—now rather desperate—have curtailed my travels. When I had the money I hadn't the health, & now that I have the health I haven't the money. Only cheap 'bus & excursion rates now enable me to get around as I do. Literary revision—which I do in addition to original writing (the late Houdini was among my clients)—has all gone to hell. Unusual events are very rare with me—slow shrinkage being the general rule of life. My family has now shrunk to one aunt & myself, & last May we combined households in this ancient backwater which belongs to the college & has a very cheap rental despite its good location, comfortable spaciousness, & admirable steam heat & hot water. I have always wanted to live in an old house, but never succeeded till poverty drove me to this one! I have become extremely fond of the place—whose size has enabled us to get a good many old family things—furniture, paintings, statuary, &c—out of storage. It seems, in some ways, tremendously like the old home on a small scale. I believe I mentioned that my own personal quarters consist of a library & a bedroom—my desk being at a west window with a

fine view of old roofs & gardens, distant spires & towers, & the glamorous sunset beyond. My library contains about 2,000 volumes, though I have catalogued only the weird section of it. My favourite authors—aside from the Graeco-Roman classics & the English poets & essayists of the 18th century—are Poe, Dunsany, Machen, Blackwood, M. R. James, Walter de la Mare, & others of that type. Apart from phantasy, I prefer realism in fiction—Balzac, Flaubert, de Maupassant, Zola, Proust, &c. I think the French are better adapted than we to the reflection of life as a whole—our Anglo-Saxon specialty being poetry. I dislike nearly all Victorian literature, & believe that such very recent material as escapes freakishness has more promise than most of the stuff immediately preceding it. Ultra-modernism I regard as mainly a blind alley, though it may contribute isolated elements to the mainstream. I like conservatism in style, & think recent prose tends to be slipshod & inartistic. In music my taste is very poor—probably as a result of violin lessons forced on me when I was too young—& very rapidly forgotten. I am a frank barbarian, with Victor Herbert as about the upper limit of my real appreciation. In painting my taste is conservative, with landscapes as my favourite subjects. I wish I could draw & paint—as many of my family have done—but I can't. In architecture I hate functional modernism as a bull is supposed to hate a red rag. The classical is my first choice, though I poignantly appreciate a really soaring specimen of Gothic. All told, it is possible that science, history, & philosophy interest me more than aesthetics. Politically I used to be a reactionary—royalist & federalist—but recent realistic thought has switched me to an almost opposite pole of economic liberalism—government ownership, artificially allocated work, fixed schedules of pay & hours, unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, & so on. But I don't think the people can ever govern themselves. Reforms will have to come through a fascistic rule of the trained few unless they are to peter out in a mess. I am all for the preservation of the main cultural tradition, & have no use at all for radical upheavals like Russian bolshevism. Philosophically I am a mechanistic materialist like George Santayana. I am greatly interested in the mystery of early man—archeology, anthropology, &c., & am a born antiquarian in every way. Perhaps my most persistent interest is the imaginative recapture of America's 18th century past. Roman history also engrosses me. I can't think of the ancient world except from a Roman point of view, & am especially

fascinated by *Roman Britain* (as Arthur Machen is), where the Roman cultural stream meets the stream of my personal ancestry. I shall yet use Roman Britain in fiction—though I don't know just how. I dislike to see great cultural fabrics split up, & am a sincere Tory in my regret for America's separation from the British Empire. I think the differences of 1775 ought to have been settled within the empire. I admire Mussolini, but think Hitler is a very inferior copy—led astray by romantic conceptions & pseudo-science. At that, though, Hitler may have formed a necessary evil—saving his country from disintegration. In general, I think any nation ought to keep close to its original dominant race-stock—remaining largely Nordic if it started that way; largely Latin if it started that way, & so on. Only in this manner can comfortable cultural homogeneity & continuity be secured. But Hitler's extremes of pure racialism are absurd & grotesque. Various race-stocks differ in inclinations & aptitudes, but of all of them I consider only the negro & australoid biologically inferior. Against these two a rigid colour-line ought to exist. As for my own stuff & literary methods & views—I have outlined these things in former letters, leaving very little to be supplied in the portrait of myself. In casual matters, an utter indifference to games & sports of every kind may be noted. My chief pleasure is seeing old houses & wandering about ancient & picturesque landscapes on summer days. I'm never under a roof in summer if the weather permits—but always take my work & reading in a bag & make for the woods & fields. I love heat & can't stand the cold—so that I may have to move south some day despite my intense attachment to my native scenery & atmosphere. Walking is my only form of real exercise—and in this pursuit I have developed an almost unlimited endurance in recent years. I prefer only 2 meals a day, on a flexible schedule. I usually work best at night. I abhor all sea food with a tremendous & inexplicable violence, & dote on cheese, chocolate, & ice cream. I don't care for tobacco & have never tasted intoxicating liquor. In general, I prefer an Apollonian to a Dionysian attitude. I have an inordinate fondness for *cats* of every shape & kind, including the toughest & most battered old Thomas-warriors. In aspect I am 5 ft. 11 in. tall, weight vacillating on either side of 145, very light complexion, brown eyes, brown hair turning iron grey, stoop shoulders, & a phiz as ugly as hell with elongated proboscis & lantern jaw. Plain & conservative in attire, & unobtrusive & retiring in manner except when I get started on an argumen-

tative conversation. Argument—either oral or epistolary—is something I can't resist.

..... Mastering Greek after 40 is a feat to be proud of—I haven't been able to retain much of the little I got when I was 16 & 17! There used to be a polyglot testament—Latin, Greek, & English—in our old dark attic, but I let it go during one of the later upheavals. Now I'm almost sorry that I did—indeed, I always regret it when I let a book go.

.... My ancestry is shy on writers—unless some of the clergymen (all in England) listed on my charts published sermons or other stuff that I know nothing about. The things I keep for family interest are the paintings by my mother (d. 1921) & elder aunt (d. 1932), which really have marked artistic merit (especially my late aunt's) in addition to their associational value to me. Many were hopelessly spoilt in storage, but some were never stored & others have been successfully touched up & repaired. A great marine view by my aunt now hangs in the large space over the staircase. I also have a very old crayon drawing by my grandmother, & may possibly inherit a painting by a great-aunt later on. It would be much more convenient if my reliques of family talent were compact books instead of large canvases—but I try to hang on to everything as long as I can. I don't care to live at all—and don't intend to—unless I can keep a reasonable number of my accustomed things around me—the tables, chairs, bookcases, pictures, books, & ornaments which I have known all my life, & which have stayed on through five removals. These things spell *home* to me, & I would not know what to do without them. .... Yrs. most sincerely,

H. P. Lovecraft

688. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Feb. 14, 1934

My dear Rimel:—

... *Pickman's Model* describes the Boston North End as it was until a few years ago, though many of these old tangled alleys have now been swept away by civic change—the ancient houses demolished, and ware-



houses erected on their site. I remember when the precise location of the artist's house in the story was hit by the razing process. It was in 1927, and Donald Wandrei (whose stories you probably know, and who was then living in his home town of St. Paul, Minn., though he is now in N. Y.) was visiting the East for the first time. He wanted to see the site of the story, and I was very glad to take him to it—thinking that its sinister quaintness would even surpass his expectations. Imagine my dismay, then, at finding nothing but a blank open space where the tottering old houses and zigzag alley-windings had been! It took me all more aback because they were still there as late as the preceding summer. Well—Wandrei had to accept my word about what had been there, although we could still trace the course of the principal cobblestoned lane among the gaping foundation walls. A year later the whole thing was covered up with a great brick building. In Brooklyn, the Red Hook section described in my story is probably about the same as it was. I haven't been there in years, but doubt if any demolition or development process has been inaugurated. When you come to read *The Shunned House* you'll see a description of an old Providence district not far from where I live—a Benefit St. neighbourhood halfway down the hill and several blocks north of here. . . . The graveyard in *The Unnamable* is really the old Charter St. Burying Ground in Salem. There is an old house abutting on it (also mentioned by Hawthorne in *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret*), with a cracked tomb nearby; and there is also a huge willow engulfing an illegible slab near the centre of the cemetery. *From Beyond*, like *The Nameless City*, was rejected by all the paying magazines. Hope the rest of the Yuggothian Fungi won't disappoint you. By the way—as to those artificial names of unearthly places and gods and persons and entities—there are different ways of coining them. To a large extent they are designed to suggest—either closely or remotely—certain names in actual history or folklore which have weird or sinister associations connected with them. Thus "Yuggoth" has a sort of Arabic or Hebraic cast, to suggest certain words passed down from antiquity in the magical formulae contained in Moorish and Jewish manuscripts. Other synthetic names like "Nug" and "Yeb" suggest the dark and mysterious tone of Tartar or Thibetan folklore. Dunsany is the greatest of all name-coiners, and he seems to have three distinct models—the Oriental (either Assyrian or Baby-

lonian, or Hebrew from the Bible), the classical (from Homer mostly), and the Celtic (from the Arthurian cycle, etc.). Thus he invents Eastern-sounding words like "Gyshaw", "Sardathrion", "Bethmoora", etc., Hellenistic terms like "Argimenes", "Poltarnees", etc., and pseudo-Celtic names like "Arleon" and "Camorak". I myself sometimes follow Dunsany's plan, but I also have a way strictly my own—which I use for devising *non-human* names, as of the localities and inhabitants of other planets. It is clear (though most writers fail to realise it) that the language supposed to be used by non-earthly beings—without human vocal organs and with no knowledge of terrestrial traditions—ought not to resemble human speech in any way. The sounds ought not to follow any human language-pattern, and ought not to be derived from—or adapted to—the human speech-equipment at all. In other words, the whole design ought to be alien to both the ideas and tongue of mankind—a series of sounds of altogether different origins and associations, and capable only in part of reproduction by the human throat and palate and mouth. Just how far, and in what direction, such a sound-system ought to differ from human speech, must of course depend on how far and in what direction the imaginary users are represented as differing. In representing such sounds on paper, it is of course understood that our Roman alphabet can do it only imperfectly—since that alphabet was designed for a human language. Usually my stories assume that the non-human sounds were known to certain human scholars in elder days, and recorded in secret manuscripts like the *Necronomicon*, the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, etc. In that case I likewise assume that the prehistoric or ancient authors of these manuscripts gave the non-human names an unconscious twist in the direction of their own respective languages—as always occurs when scholars and writers encounter an utterly alien nomenclature and try to represent it to their own people. Thus when I cite the name of some wholly non-human thing supposed to be mentioned in the *Necronomicon*, I try to have the foundation of the word absolutely unearthly and alien, yet give it an outwardly Arabic aspect to account for the transmitting influence of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred. Typical *Necronomicon* names are *Azathoth*, *Yog-Sothoth*, *Shub-Niggurath*, etc. Often Clark Ashton Smith (who is almost as fertile a name-creator as Dunsany!) and I try to give different variants of the same unearthly or prehistoric name

to represent the different variants under which different races refer to the same thing as remembered from primitive times . . . as, for instance, some Nordic races spoke of *Odin* and *Freya* while others spoke of *Woden* and *Frigga*, or as the Hindoo *Dyans-Pitar* became the Roman *Iuppiter*. Thus I have had *Yog-Sothoth* occur (in a story I wrote for a client) as *Yog-Sototl* among the Aztecs, while Smith (borrowing it from me) has coined the mediaeval form *Iog-Sotôt* for his mythical *Averoigne*. And he has used his own *Tsathoggua* in various forms such as the pseudo-mediaeval *Sodagui*, etc. Many realists violently object to the practice of using these coined names, averring that it gives a childish effect to the stories concerned. I can see their point, but do not think their objection can be applied indiscriminately. Carelessly, injudiciously coined, or excessively used artificial names do rather cheapen a tale; but it is certainly advantageous now and then to introduce a coined word which has been shaped with great care from just the right associational sources. At times I have dreamt certain utterly alien names such as *Kuranex*, *Nasht*, and *Kaman-Thab*—all of course having vague linguistic sources in things I have read. As for writing out the hellish and forbidden *Necronomicon*—that would be quite an order, though I might manage to produce an isolated chapter now and then. Incidentally, anent the synthetic names we use so much, Clark Ashton Smith and I call each other *Klarkash-Ton* and *Ech-Pi-El*. I once built up a whole cycle of legend around Smith's *Tsathoggua* and used it in a story I re-wrote for a revision client, but unfortunately the story was rejected.\*\*

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

\*\* Lovecraft alludes here to *The Mound*, by Zealia Bishop, which was finally published by *Weird Tales* in 1940. The *Yog-Sototl* story revision mentioned previously is *The Electric Executioner*, by Adolphe de Castro.

689. TO F. LEE BALDWIN

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
March 5, 1934

My dear Mr. Baldwin:—

. . . . No, long letters never bore me—and I only hope that my own do not bore my correspondents. I lean to the habits of my favourite 18th century in doing a good deal of letter writing. While you are probably right in deeming organised correspondence clubs (where writing must be more or less trivial & perfunctory, I imagine) rather futile, I believe that a really intelligent epistolary contact with persons in widely different regions can sometimes be a very valuable broadening & maturing influence. Only the exceptional individual can have face-to-face contact with enough varied types to give him a representative idea of his own civilisation as a whole, yet with the aid of letters he can exchange opinions & perspectives with minds of every sort. I have found this so myself. As a person of very retired life, I met very few different sorts of people in youth—and was therefore exceedingly narrow & provincial. Later on, when literary activities brought me into touch with widely diverse types by mail—Texans like Robert E. Howard, men in Australia, New Zealand, &c., Westerners, Southerners, Canadians, people in old England, & assorted kinds of folk nearer at hand—I found myself opened up to dozens of points of view which would otherwise never have occurred to me. My understanding & sympathies were enlarged, & many of my social, political, & economic views were modified as a consequence of increased knowledge. Only correspondence could have effected this broadening; for it would have been impossible to have visited all the regions & met all the various types involved, while books can never talk back or discuss. Even as it is, I realise that my broadening is only partial—since it does not extend outside the English-speaking world. But at least my perspective & sense of proportion are just a bit improved. However—I realise that such a broadening could never have resulted from a merely casual & promiscuous



correspondence. The only correspondence worth having is with persons who really have something to say to one. When an individual has certain highly specialised & uncommon tastes—as, for example, an interest in weird fiction—it almost always requires correspondence to put him in touch with enough people of like tastes to form a circle of discussion. It isn't likely that one could ever encounter more than one or two others with such exceptional tastes within the relatively narrow circle of personal acquaintance in one geographic locality. ....

With every good wish—yrs. most sincerely,

H. P. Lovecraft.

690. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Perkins Manor

March 6, 1934

Candent Convert to Connubial Catenation:—

.....  
I lately read the celebrated *Anthony Adverse* (lent by Dwyer)—taking five days to plough my leisurely course through its 1224 pages. I presume it might have taken you all of three hours to cover that much ground. The thing gives quite a picture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, tho' it is indubitably overrated. A bit mawkish, and heavy with bald philosophick speculation. Other recent items on my calendar are Dunsany's new book—*The Curse of the Wise Woman*—Weigall's *Wanderings in Roman Britain*, and A. Merritt's old yarn *The Metal Monster*, which I had never read before because Eddy told me it was dull. The damn'd fool! (nephew—not our late bibliophilick friend) Actually, the book contains the most remarkable presentation of the utterly alien and non-human that I have ever seen. I don't wonder that Merritt calls it his "best and worst" production. The human characters are commonplace and wooden—just pulp hokum—but the scenes and phaenomena .... oh, boy! ...

Blessings—

L. Percinius Theobaldus

691. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

At the Edge of the Voor—

Hour when the Aklo Colours coruscate.

Mar. 9, 1934

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

.....  
You must not fail to draw me at least sketchy likenesses of Dame Simaetha and Genl. Tabasco—for the more you say of them, the more interested I become! Dwyer has just sent me some fascinating snaps of his black imp—a veritable fragment of the eternal Night! I mentioned them to Count Magnus the other day as he crouched on his beloved back-fence, and his answering purrs and rubbings were eloquent of curiosity. But behold! There is news from Ulthar! Not many days ago Mrs. Spotty, the white and black lady at the boarding-house across the back garden (Alfred Galpin's foster-mother of last summer) was delivered of the liveliest and most fascinating set of triplets ever beheld on this side of the River Skai. Eyes just open. Two—both Maltese—are promised to discriminating ailurophiles elsewhere; but the third—white and black like mamma—will be retained and reared. It is needless to say that I shall do considerable friendly borrowing in the weeks to come, when Little Belknap (as I shall call him) is less dependent on immediate maternal vicinage! I hope he will not follow little Alfred Galpin into the baffling abyss of invisibility! There's a fine black and white feline—Oswald—at Sultan Malik's new habitat!

Thine in The Bond of Pueth—

E'ch-Pi-El

692. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

At the Edge of the Voor-Hour  
When the Aklo colours coruscate  
(March 19, 1934)

Dear Ar-Ech-Bei:—

..... I seem to have a good deal of Celtic blood from Welsh, Cornish, and Devonian lines. My Musgrave line descends from a companion of William the Conqueror, and contains the only *weird* legend connected with my ancestry. This is the legend of Eden Hall in Cumberland, seat of the family until quite recent times. It is given erroneously in a German poem by Uhland and thence paraphrased in a verse of Longfellow's—but the original version of the tale is as follows: A drinking-glass was stolen by a Musgrave from the fairies, who thereafter made futile attempts to recover it. In the end, the fairies pronounced the following prophecy—indicating that disaster would overtake the house of Musgrave unless the glass was kept intact:

"If the glass either break or fall,  
Farewell to the luck of Eden Hall."

In the family there actually existed an old glass, supposed to be the one of the legend, which was guarded with the most extreme care. Upon the breaking up of the estate and sale of Eden Hall after the World War, this glass was placed in the South Kensington Museum, London. I hope no one will smash it, since that would doubtless bring me some sort of evil through my Musgrave side! Henrietta Musgrave in 1774 married Sir John Morris, Bart., of Clasemont—and their granddaughter Rachel Morris married William Allgood of Nunwick (Northumberland) in 1817, and became the mother of Helen (Allgood) Lovecraft, my father's mother. Thus a great-great-great-grandmother of mine was born with the name of Musgrave of Eden Hall. You are fortunate to have an ancestor with the evil eye. An old lady in Boston whom I knew—and who died just a year ago—was a direct descendant of Mary Easty, one of the Salem witches hanged in 1692—and therefore a collateral descendant of the more famous Rebecca Nurse (Mrs. Easty's

sister), whose ancient house (built 1636) in Danvers, Mass. (near Salem—formerly called Salem-Village) is still in existence and open as a public museum.

.....  
Regards—Yr. obt. Servt.  
—Ech-Pi-El

693. TO JAMES F. MORTON

March 28, 1934

Beacon-Bright Basker in Befitting Bulletining:—

.....  
Actually, though, I don't see why a trained detec pulpist couldn't make quite a thing out of this idea of doing sherlocking through abstruse petroglyphical clues. Naturally, every science which involves strange and intricate identifications and proofs of things is capable of clever use by the facile vandiner—so why not mineralogy? And I can easily believe that a well-concocted series of this sort—if freed from Doc Dake's hilarious crudities, tritenesses, and naiveté—would go over big with the devotees of the especial science involv'd. . . .

As to Doc's dope—to begin with, I can't but vociferate the opinion that the saddling of the lay-figures with rockological names is a lousily cheap trick. Nothing makes a tale so hollow and unconvincing as punning, allegorical, eccentric, or excessively put nomenclature. See how asinine poor old Dickens's grotesque concoctions appear today—and how pompous and stilted even the names of my eighteenth century—Peregrine Pickle, Anthony Absolute, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, etc.—are. For gawd's sake don't have puppets like Sir Stoneham Pyrites, Capt. Magnetite de Magistris, Prof. Boulder B. Traprock, etc., etc. cluttering up your pages! But as for Doc's general ideas—some of 'em ain't bad. It ought to be quite interesting to have the technical spieling of mineralogy unwound snappily in the course of unravelling some clue or tracking down some rock-greedy fiend in human form. For instance—you could have a great mineralogical curator from Paterson murdered by some spy of the American Museum—the latter institution being jealous of having its pebble section surpass'd. Later it could be discover'd that the assassin had left his photograph imprinted on some



obscurely sensitive stone (if none exists, invent one!) that yields up its secrets only under a blend of inframauve light from a special fur-lined vacuum tube. Then, when the murderer has explain'd this away by saying he left the image on some other visit, in stalks Old King Brady the Petrological Pinkerton with a radio-active kind of feldspar or sparkill or solidified argon which restores the life-vibrations of the murder'd man. Up sits the great curator on his bier, and points his finger at the dastard from 79th street. "He done it!" "He done it!" But since the victim ain't dead no more, the murderer is left off on probation . . . tho' the American Museum is forced to transfer most of its treasures to the enlarged marble palace at Summer Street and Broadway. Everybody happy—all's well that ends well. In our next issue, Curator Plantagenet-Perkins and Old King Brady Dake foil the miscreants who plan to mine gold from the sun in space-ships and put the world off the gold standard. I fancy your idea of canning the serial stuff and having a series of independent shorts is by far the best one. You could vary your locale and incidents magnificently; having unknown minerals found in crypts under aeon-old deserted cities in the African jungle, and all that. Then there are hellish stony secrets filtering down from the forgotten elder world—think of the Eye of Tsathoggua, hinted at in the *Livre d'Eibon*, and of the carved primal monstrosity in lavender pyro-jadeite caught up in a Kanaka fisherman's hut off the coast of Ponape! God! Suppose the world *knew why* Curator Konbifhashi Taximeto of the Wiggiwaga Museum in Kyoto committed hara-kiri after examining the fluorescent emanations of this unholy blasphemy through the differential spectroheliograph!

. . . These alleged authors are pretty easy to handle—discard their dope little by little and substitute your own, and in the end they not only swallow it but honestly believe they wrote it themselves! Thus some of my revision clients congratulate *themselves* when the readers of *Weird Tales* praise stories (like *The Last Test*, *The Curse of Yig*, *The Horror in the Museum*, *Winged Death*, etc.) that *I* wrote. . . .

Speaking of deteckatiff dope—the enclosed Dickybird stamp\*\* on its envelope (which I have been instructed to pass along to you) is a re-

\*\* The reference here is to the 1933 Byrd Antarctic Expedition commemorative issue. "Inspector Smiffkins" is Charles W. Smith of Haverhill, Massachusetts, publisher of *The Tryout*.

minder of a case on which Inspectors Smiffkins and Theobald-Perkins of Scotland Yard are now working. On the 10th of March, 1934, I receiv'd from Groveland Grange an epistle containing a request that I pass the envelope and stamp along to you. Well—the stamp was only a common three cent Washington of the current series, so instead of blindly obeying, I put it to one side and asked my correspondent if he hadn't made some mistake. Incidentally, I noted (and mention'd) that the envelope bore a "Returned for postage" stamping—over which the stamp was affix'd—and a double Haverhill postmark . . . *one March 9, 10:30 a. m.* and the other *March 9, 11:30 a. m.* Well—honest Tryout reply'd by return mail, outlining the following facts and venturing the following conclusion:

(a) The letter had been mailed with a Dickybird—hence the request to shoot along to Paterson.

(b) It *had not* been returned to Groveland Grange for postage.

(c) Smiffkins *has never used or possessed* (except, I suppose, for one in his collection) a three cent Washington stamp, such as the envelope bore. *Conclusion:* Some damn'd thieving clerk in the Haverhill P. O. peeled off and swiped the valuable Dickybird and substituted a common stamp after affixing a false "Returned for postage" legend to explain the removal of the Dicky.

Well—Inspector Theobald-Perkins now haul'd out the offending envelope and put it under the fluorescent lens. Sure enough, the paper bore marks of the peeling off of a long Dicky prior to the affixing of the common Georgiwash. *Natural* peeling would not cause this roughness. Besides, if the letter had *really* been found stampless it would either have *really* been sent back to Smiffkins or (in case the evidence of former stamp presence was unmistakable) have been shot ahead to me without any stamp. I've had 'em come that way. No ordinary postal clerk gives away three-centers thro' sheer philanthropy. Just why the elaborate "Returned for postage" dodge was used is not quite clear to me, unless it was to still curiosity of some sort at the Providence office. Perhaps, though, since the theft occurred after cancellation (I know it did from the state of the postmark); the robber didn't wish to risk either an *obviously artificially peeled* stampless envelope or an obviously interpolated common stamp. But he sent the letter on with amusing speed—only an hour betwixt postmarks! I noticed this myself before hearing Tryout's explanation, and wonder'd how any ordinary postman could ever

have got the letter back to 408 and ahead to the P. O. again in a single hour! So, after due use of his massive eye and eagle brain, Inspector Theobald-Perkins decided that the suspicions of Smiffkins were indeed justify'd. Tryout has suspected local clerks of such malefactions before, and the pusillanimousness of that damn'd rat Paul Pry in your own office proves what low fellows occasionally get into the postal personnel! The envelope of evidence has now gone back to Inspector Tryout-Smith, and the next act in the drama will be his confrontation of a dismay'd post-office force with the damning clue. I have as yet receiv'd no report of this, but am daily awaiting bulletins. The eye of justice never sleeps! ....

Yr. obt.—

Grandpa Theobald-Perkins.

694. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
March 29, 1934

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... There has been some warmer weather hereabouts, so that overcoatless trips downtown are becoming far from uncommon. The record-breaking snow of Feby. 26th melted with gratifying swiftness. Before long I hope to take a few preliminary walks in the slowly awakening countryside—& I hope your own outdoor programme can also be resumed presently. You will have balmy days before we do up here—I recall the delicious warmth of April 12, 1925, when I first beheld Washington. It is barely possible that I can get to Florida this spring to visit a friend in De Land (young Barlow, whose tales you have seen in the *Fantasy Fan*), though financial considerations have so far kept the prospect from being really probable. ....

As for the small poetry magazines—as I have said before, I think they are distinctly encouraging, & that therefore they fulfil a useful function. It is absolutely impossible to get more than a small portion of one's verse published professionally, even if one is a widely recognised & well-received poet; & these humble booklets form an excellent

means of preserving & diffusing items which would otherwise be confined to manuscript existence. As you are aware, some of the small magazines contain verses by the most celebrated of contemporary bards. It certainly does *not* harm one to have been a steady contributor to these non-professional & semi-professional verse media—for the situation is entirely different from that pertaining to prose. But of course, there is no advantage in telling professional markets of the reputation one has gained in private circles. They are more or less indifferent to such matters. ....

The advent of Spring—even technically—is surely pleasant to think of. I've had two glimpses of the countryside so far—one on March 5, when a warm day sent me splashing through the mud & melting snow of the fields & woods, & another on the 18th, when my aunt & I were treated to a motor ride toward Worcester. Despite the hard winter, many oak forests have retained their withered leaves—giving to the vernal landscape a curiously *autumnal* appearance. I never before saw the ponds & brooks so high—& when I crossed the broad gorge of the Blackstone on the 5th I found the lower banks completely overflowed; with great trees & cottage roofs projecting above an aqueous expanse like reliques of sunken Atlantis. No real floods like those of 1927 are expected.

Have just read Machen's new book—*The Green Round*—his first weird production in 17 years. It is really extremely interesting—with something of that persistent sense of unreal worlds impinging on the real world which many imaginative persons possess. In the casualness & unexplainedness of the phenomena represented, it recalls some of Machen's queer prefaces to his earlier books. However—it is marred by a certain rambling diffuseness, tameness, & over-use of typical stylistic mannerisms!

Some excellent temporary art exhibits at the local museum. Egyptian tomb paintings (following the Etruscan I spoke of before), Staffordshire china, Chinese textiles, & even one of the most important displays of modern Spanish art ever exhibited in the country. All these are accompanied by suitable lectures—I shall know something about art before it's all over! ....

All good wishes—

Yrs most sincerely,

HPLovecraft



695. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.  
Providence, R. I.  
March 29, 1934

My dear Rimel:—

..... From 1906 to 1918 I contributed monthly articles on astronomical phenomena to one of the lesser Providence dailies. One thing that helped me greatly was the free access which I had to the Ladd Observatory of Brown University—an unusual privilege for a kid, but made possible because Prof. Upton—head of the college astronomical department and director of the observatory—was a friend of the family. I suppose I pestered the people at the observatory half to death, but they were very kind about it. I had a chance to see all the standard modern equipment of an observatory (including a 12" telescope) in action, and read endlessly in the observatory library. The professors and their humbler assistant—an affable little cockney from England named John Edwards—often helped me pick up equipment, and Edwards made me some magnificent photographic lantern-slides (from illustrations in books) which I used in giving illustrated astronomical lectures before clubs. ...

By the way—let me hasten to correct your all-too-kind suspicion that I am the artist behind my own bookplate. . . The artist in question—as I thought I had mentioned before—is my young friend *Wilfred B. Talman*, whose stories and verse you must have seen occasionally in *Weird Tales*. Talman is not a *fantastic* artist, but excels in everything pertaining to *formal design*. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, and has won several prizes for work of a decorative sort—being especially skilled in heraldic blazonry. He made a splendid sketch of my coat-of-arms and wanted to use it on my bookplate, but I preferred something more closely connected with Old Providence—hence the typical eighteenth century Providence doorway. Talman has done bookplates for several of our group—including himself. He is a pleasant chap of twenty-eight—of an old Dutch family of Spring Valley, N. Y., where he was born and where his ancestors have lived for two hundred

fifty years. I encountered him through the amateur journalistic circle—it being pure coincidence that he attended Brown University and the School of Design in my town. His chief interests are genealogy, design, heraldry, history, and New-Netherland Dutch folklore—weirdness being a subsidiary interest connected with his folklore tastes. He is an authority on the history and colonial architecture of his region—this antiquarianism being quite a tie between us. Despite his youth he is prominent in the famous and exclusive Holland Society of New York, and is editor of its quarterly publication *De Halve Maen*. I'll enclose a copy of the latter (please return) with an article of mine on Dutch influences in colonial New England. Talman was once a reporter on the *N. Y. Times* but is now associate editor of the four trade papers published by the Texas Oil Co. His offices are in New York, on the eighteenth floor of the Chrysler Building (second-tallest building in the world), but he hates the metropolis so bitterly that he will not live there. Instead, he has fitted up as a home for himself, wife, and infant son, a disused stable on his father's estate—the land where he and all his direct paternal forbears since the 1600's were born. He commutes from Spring Valley to New York every day, despite the two-hour trip. Incidentally—the mother of Talman's wife is an own cousin of the prominent German statesman Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank. As a *weird* writer Talman will never be in a class with Smith and Howard and Wandrei and Long and Price. He is too much of an intellectual as opposed to a dreamer to shine in bizarre and fantastic conceptions. Yet his ideas are often tremendously clever, and occasionally tales of his are really splendid.

..... Another place that might interest you is the home of Sarah Helen Whitman—the poetess to whom Poe was for a time engaged. The rear of this house overlooks the hidden churchyard of St. John's, where Poe used to wander on moonlight nights. The engagement was finally broken off through the influence of Mrs. Whitman's mother—old Mrs. Power—who objected to Poe's drinking habits. Many of the older Providence people remembered Poe, and refused to appreciate his work because of his frequent drunken appearances on our streets. The mother of my elder aunt's husband knew Mrs. Whitman, and so prejudiced her son against Poe that he always argued with me when I defended him. Mrs. Whitman herself was a very passable poetess—

smooth and pleasing, though in no way original or distinguished. Her house in Benefit St. at the corner of steeply-descending Church St. is a very typical sample of the ordinary Providence houses built from about 1750 to about 1800. It is still in excellent condition—owned by the Episcopal diocese of Providence and used as an adjunct of St. Dunstan's choral school. ....

Yrs. most sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

696. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Out on Prospect Terrace  
April 3-7-8, 1934

Dear Ar-I-E'ch:—

As for the constitution—all one may ask is whether or not our revered Sacred Cow of 1789, written before any of our present economic and social conditions were even dreamed of, interferes with the stern and necessary task of creating an economic order capable of giving every man a chance to earn his living. If it does not interfere with that task, then let it alone. It has its valuable points as well as many irrelevant and obsolete points. But if it *does* interfere with that task—a task undoubtedly demanding some governmental checks on business unforeseen in 1789—then the only thing to do is to ignore or amend it. It is more important to restore earning power to the people than to follow out literally some now irrelevant precepts written 145 years ago in a vanished world. If a constitution is to be of any use, it must have some reference to the conditions of the age. To amend the hoary document in certain necessary places would not mean the destruction of the basic spirit in which it was conceived.

Government certainly has a devil of a struggle ahead of it. Every move ahead in the direction of a more equitable and humane order will undoubtedly be fought tooth and nail by the blindly selfish interests of the old decaying order, so that each change will have to come slowly. Moreover—there are always the well-meant protests of individualists who resent the regulation needed to restore opportunity to the whole

population. These latter don't seem to realise that governmental oversight doesn't *destroy* opportunity, but rather *restores* an opportunity previously destroyed by other forces. A laissez-faire policy means merely a hidden control by great industrial and financial interests. To fight this *natural result of technical "freedom"* it is worth while to yield a bit of the technical article. That is the only way we can hope to get a bit of the freedom which is real . . . . freedom to live and think outside the shadow of imminent want and suffering, and outside the prison of paralysing overwork. But what a job! After the new system is won, then will come the problem of how to run it—and here again will be turmoil and squabbling and indecision. . .

.....

Quite an amusing debate is going on over the original German title of our old friend von Junzt's *Nameless Cults*. You'll recall that I got the rendering *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* from young Derleth—who ought to know, being one of a compact German-American community. Price, however, was not satisfied with the translation, and finally decided that *Unnennbaren Kulten* was much more exact. Wright is now trying to decide what he'll do. *Unnennbaren Kulten* is probably more exact—but *Unaussprechlichen* has such a sinister, mouth-filling rhythm that it seems almost a pity to let it go if it can be found in any way usable. I think I told you that a coming story in *W. T.*, which I ghost-wrote for a client, will revolve to a very great extent around a certain ritual in the hellish Black Book.

Yr. most obt. Servnt.,  
E'ch-Pi-El

697. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Mosque of Azathoth, in Pillar'd Irem  
April 9, 1934

Dear Malik:—

.....

Yes—I think a really good interplanetary story would be unsalable. The best stories of all kinds are. As to my stuff—the *Mts. of Madness*



is a novelette representing my most serious endeavour—Antarctic archaeology and polar mystery of a type that has haunted me since I was 11 years old. Its rejection by Wright in 1931 was a psychological setback doing much to freeze me into silence. I agree that my best medium is realism, though I am not certain whether the widespread advice to stick to New England backgrounds ought to be followed too literally. There is a kind of *archaeological* horror dealing with lonely and remote places which I have to get out of my system every now and then. *The Outsider* is a thing I wouldn't be apt to duplicate. But what I want to do is to embody certain moods and pictures in tales whose central horror-causes are not too *concrete* or essentially *trivial* (material monsters, conventional wraiths, etc.) to be adequate. There is some vague dream-world of macabre, cosmic conceptions which I can sometimes glimpse and adumbrate, but can never pin down.

Blessings, bismillah, and all that—  
Abdul Alhazred

698. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Koshtra Pivrarcha  
—April 10, 1934

Dear Ar-Ech-Bei:—

..... My economical system of light travel represents the cumulative fruits of a decade of planning. I carry no suit save the one on my aged carcass, and do a great deal of primitive linen-washing myself. Not very stylish—but I don't travel for style! Financially this will be a damn tight squeak, and I may yet have to cut out most of the stops. I never before planned so long a trip on so little cash. The round trip from Providence is about \$36.00, and I may not have more than \$30.00 more than that for all expenses. Fortunately I have reduced the matter of frugal eating to a science, so that I can get by on as little as \$1.75 per week by purchasing beans or spaghetti in cans and cookies or crackers in packages. I shall carry a knife, fork, spoon, and can-opener, and remain largely independent of restaurants. Hotel expenses average a dollar or more a night, but one can sometimes beat that on a weekly basis. In Charleston, for example, the Y might put me up a

week for \$5.00, so that I could remain fully fed for about \$7.00. In 1931 I got a really splendid room in St. Augustine for \$4.00 a week.  
....

.....  
... *Winged Death* was nothing to run a temperature over, though Belknap has taken an unaccountable fancy to it. My share in it is something like 90 to 95% ....  
.....

Yrs. for the Elder Sign—  
Ech-Pi-El

699. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.  
Providence, R. I.  
April 13, 1934

My dear Rimel:—

.....  
..... A little over a decade ago I grew uncomfortably fat through the overeating habits urged on me by a solicitous family who sought to combat my lack of ravenous appetite—but in 1925 I inaugurated a record-breaking reducing campaign and knocked off fifty pounds in five months. Now I keep track of my diet and have no tendency to pile on the suet again. I must have shot above two hundred in 1924 ... I stopped getting weighed when I went over one hundred eighty-eight. My collar size, now 14¼, shot up to 16¼! .....

.. The boat sounds interesting—I used to row considerably on the Seekonk, which you'll find on your city map ... and also on general maps of R. I. Often I would land on one or both of the Twin Islands—for islands (associated with remote secrets, pirate treasure, and all that) always fascinated me. I have occasionally found arrowheads—for R. I. was the core of the Narragansett country—but for petrified wood I had to depend on my grandfather's collection. ....  
....

Yrs. most sincerely—  
Ech-Pi-El

700. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

YMCA—  
Charleston,  
April 29, '34

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

.....

As you have already perceived from the postmark & date-line of this epistle, my southern trip *did* materialise. Had a pleasant week in N. Y. with Long & all the old group, & then shot down by 'bus to my favourite of all cities—the ancient & mellow home of "Choir Practice". Reached here at dawn Tuesday. Am stopping at YMCA & absorbing colonial atmosphere as usual. Marvellous place—it certainly excels any other city I have ever seen, even Quebec. And the climate is superb. I have three times the energy I ever have in the north. Full summer here—rich green vegetation, hot days, straw hats, & all. On to Savannah May 1st, & in De Land, Fla. May 2 unless plans change. Temporary address for a fortnight or so—c/o R. H. Barlow, Box 88, De Land, Florida. But I hate to leave old Charleston! On my return trip I may be able to stop off in Washington—I hope so, but can't tell. Finances are embarrassingly tight—I never before attempted to cover so much distance on so little cash! A friend in Alacon, Ga. wants me to visit him, but I doubt if I can do it.

My prospective host is a delightful young fellow—book collector & embryonic weird author. You've probably seen his stuff in the *Fantasy Fan*. His household includes 5 cats & 6 infant *opossums* (whose mother was slain by a motor) which he feeds with a medicine-dropper! ....

Best regards—  
HPLovecraft

701. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

YMCA  
Charleston, S. C.  
April 29, 1934

Hail, O BuādvāeAā!

..... A \$1.75 per week eating programme is easy if you know how to manage it. It means merely keeping down to a quarter a day, and I can do that without half trying. When restaurants are high, I fall back on canned and package goods—knife, fork, spoon, and can opener being with me. A 5¢ package of ginger wafers is a more than sufficient breakfast, while a 10¢ can of spaghetti or beans will do for dinner—with the residue of the cookies for dessert. That's only 15¢—leaving a margin for luxury on other days. Coffee can be cut out—it isn't much for *nourishment* anyhow—or at 5¢ a cup it isn't a great item at worst. In Charleston the cheap lunch rooms are so incredibly reasonable that I don't have to resort to "home cooking". I follow either one of two plans. Sometimes I get a dime's worth of ice-cream for breakfast, and a 10¢ bowl of Mexican chili con carne (with lots of crackers) and coffee for dinner. Total for the day, 25¢. Or else I cut out breakfast altogether and stuff up at night on the incredible 25¢ *bargain dinner* provided at the Mexican Chili Place in Marion Sq. Boy, what a gorge for a quarter! It couldn't be approached in the north—Jake or no Jake! Not only is it a full feast, but a choice of three meats is offered. Last night I had the following Lucullan trough-fest .... and all for one solitary quarter: pork sausage (generous allotment), fried potato, huge mountain of hominy, load of beets, two corn biscuits and butter, coffee, and bread pudding. Can you beat it? I fear it will set back my reducing—although I've knocked off 4 lbs. since last Sunday, when I bade farewell to the dangerous luxury of the Long board. (By the way—my Y room is only \$3.75 per week.)

.....

Yrs. for the Elder Sign—  
Grandpa Ech-Pi.El.



702. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

c/o Barlow,  
Box 88,  
De Land, Fla.,  
May 21, 1934.

My dear Wright:—

I am interested to hear of your plan to reprint the *Arthur Jermyn* tale—which was always one of my favourites. So far as I can recall, Baird made no inexcusable excisions or conspicuous blunders in the text, although he did stick on an outrageously naive and give-away title. The original title of this story was *Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family*, although I have always had plain *Arthur Jermyn* in reserve as a possible alternative title. In view of the possible awkwardness of the full title in the table of contents, it might be best for you to call the story just *Arthur Jermyn*. But certainly, I'd like to avoid the inept Baird-given title if it can possibly be managed.

Yrs. most sincerely,  
H. P. L.

703. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

c/o Barlow,  
Box 88,  
De Land, Fla.  
May 21, 1934

My dear Morse:—

Merritt is certainly great stuff—he has a subtle command of an unique type of strangeness which no one else has been able to parallel. You are absolutely right in considering his original *Moon Pool* novellette—as published in the *All-Story* for June 22, 1918—his best work. The sequel—*The Conquest of the Moon Pool*—was relatively common-

place and tainted with the atmosphere of cheap popular fiction. It is a major crime that many of the best touches were taken out of the novellette when it was fused with its sequel to form the ultimate book version. ....

Yrs. most sincerely—  
HPL

704. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

c/o Barlow, Box 88,  
De Land, Fla.  
May 22, 1934.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Glad you like *Celephaïs*—though the printed text had many abominable misprints, including some which seemed to present me in an illiterate light. The tale is an old one—obviously influenced by Dunsany & embodying the fragments of several actual dreams. I have not yet seen a copy of *Marvel Tales* (Barlow lost his before I reached De Land), but hope Crawford will be able to keep the venture going. ....

No—the contemporary Spanish art shown in Providence was not of the erratic sort known as "modernistic". Artistically, the modern Spaniards (except Picasso) seem to be healthily & refreshingly conservative.

..... Florida proved as attractive as usual—its almost subtropical scenery having a singular fascination, while my health is braced up enormously by the vivifying warmth. De Land is a pretty town, & nearby is De Leon Springs—with an old sugar mill dating back to the Spanish period before 1763. The Barlow place—spacious, landscaped, & with a fascinating lake in the rear—is 14 miles west of the village, out of sight of any human habitation. Young Barlow—the son of a retired army Colonel—is an infinitely bright boy, & possesses innumerable accomplishments. He is very unfortunately handicapped by poor eyesight. He expects to be in Washington in the autumn—consulting oculists. He & I are having a splendid time—motoring to various points, rowing on the lake behind the house, & having reading, writing, & discussing sessions all over the nearby coun-

tryside. His collection of books & magazines pertaining to the weird is valuable & unusual. Not long ago Barlow shot a giant snake, whose skin he is going to use for binding books. The cats & 'possums are delightful!

.....  
All good wishes—

Yrs most cordially,  
HPLovecraft

705. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

c/o R. H. Barlow,  
Box 88, De Land, Fla.  
May 26, 1934.

Dear Helen:—

It is with vast contrition that I learn of the perilous state in which my Charleston epistle was received . . . . a state which I hope may not be duplicated in the present document. If I seem to be tempting fate with the enclosed cards, I may reply that the containing envelope (an honest product of my philanthropic stationer-in-chief, Mr. Frank Winfield Woolworth) is infinitely less likely to succumb to disintegration than were the aging reliquiae of the (to my old correspondents) famous George W. Kirk charity stationery which I have been using for 9 years, & which gave out only during my present season of wandering. Back in 1925 Kirk unloaded on me an infinite number of boxes of envelopes bearing obsolete return addresses—which I thought would last till the end of my, or their, lifetime. As it is, I feel quite bewildered without them—for years I shall be instinctively crossing out an imaginary Kirk inscription in the northwest corner of perfectly blank envelopes! . . . . .

I think you are correct in pointing out the element of pompous hyper-criticism in Rachmaninoff's remarks on the infant prodigy. To my mind it is exceedingly foolish to discourage or resent early development in the arts. When such occurs, there is generally a natural & adequate reason for it—nor is any advantage likely to result from its

checking. The only thing I would tend to oppose is *forcing* as opposed to reasonable *encouragement*. A child should never be robbed of the period of care-free play & leisure which not only belongs to it by right, but is really important to its subsequent psychological & emotional equilibrium. Nearly all *forced* prodigies tend to develop ill-proportioned personalities which peter out disappointingly—cases in point being the well-known ones of William Sidis & Winifred Sackville Stoner, Jr. But of course there are cases where the child's natural recreative impulse is in the same direction as its serious talents—permitting a rapid & intensive development without undue forcing. I trust that the small & gifted Ruth may be able to triumph over parentage, overtraining, & criticism alike.

Regarding the parallelism—in some cases amounting to actual organic relationship—betwixt poetry & music, I cannot speak with any authority because of my musical ignorance. I would, however, tend to say (or guess) that the two arts each have certain phases or departments which closely approach certain phases or departments of the other. Though the primary bases of the two are widely different, the common elements of rhythm & association create large overlapping zones. Despite my vast ignorance, there are musical compositions which tend to evoke from my imagination certain definitely *visual* concepts which could be expressed (had one the skill) either in poetry or painting. And conversely, there are imaginative phases of poetry which seem to suggest paintings or musical notes—and aspects of painting which suggest music or poetry or both. The fact is, that all the arts would seem to be fundamentally related despite their profound differences in function & method. Each expresses a certain side of a single definite quality of the mind of highly evolved animal life, a quality best expressed as *a demand for the perception of modulated symmetry*. In practice, of course, this purely aesthetic demand is always mixed to an indefinite & inextricable degree with various factors of *association*, emotional & intellectual. Thus I cannot help viewing a familiar landscape both as a loyal native & as an aesthetic appreciator, while historical & antiquarian interests creep into my appreciations of architecture. These associative elements heighten the poignancy of all artistic appeal; & it is both silly & pedantic to try to rule them out absolutely, as many moderns do. I have no use at all for the theoretical abstract art of futurists, functionalists, & kindred



spawn of a sterile & disintegrative modernism. Art without tradition is only a crippled & impoverished remnant—and I hope that no freakish social overturn will ever be allowed to wreck Western Europe's mainstream. But I digress loquaciously, as usual!

As for travelling economies—dietary & otherwise—bless my soul, but I don't starve on my \$1.75 hebdomadal nutritive quota! It is merely a matter of reducing poverty to a science & extracting a maximum return from a minimum expenditure. My arbitrary minimum quota on trips like this is 25¢ per day—and it is astonishing how far this can be made to go. . . . Two meals a day are all I ever eat under any circumstances, & . . . I can always omit a meal without feeling any difference. So there is no need for the children to have any anxiety over Grandpa's health! The old gentleman has grown into a relatively tough bird in his sunset years—and such selective diets do not even begin to exercise a strain on his time-weathered constitution! I have to go below this quantity level whenever I want to knock off a few pounds of weight. Just now, amidst the lavish & gratuitous fare provided by my present genial hosts, the peril is all in the opposite direction—if I escape without indigestion & a double chin I shall be fortunate indeed!

.....

After an overnight pause in Jacksonville, I reached De Land at noon May 2, & was met by my gifted young host—a great admirer & correspondent of Klarkash-Ton, by the way. De Land is a modern town which owes all its beauty to its fine subtropical setting—live-oaks, moss, magnolias, &c.—& I will avoid tedious descriptions by sending under separate cover an illustrated folder for your gradually growing travel morgue. The Barlow place is 14 miles west of the village, & out of sight of any other human habitation—in a pleasant landscape of blue lakes & tall Australian pines that stand out against the sunset like the trees in a Japanese print. The house—scarcely completed as yet—is of rustic design with log exterior . . . of two stories, & very attractive & commodious. The grounds are undergoing appropriate landscaping under the direction of the youthful heir. In the rear is a delectable pine-fringed lakelet on which we row almost daily, & across which is a fine oak grove suitable for outdoor reading & writing sessions. A cabin will eventually be built in this grove—and my young host urges Grandpa to move down & permanently inhabit it! The climate is admirable—85°

to 90° day after day, & no chill spells at this season. I feel like a new person—as spry as a youth, & without a trace of the usual trouble which besets me in the north. I go hatless & coatless, & am maintaining an admirable layer of tan. Snakes abound to a picturesque degree; & young Barlow shoots them for their skins—which he uses in amateur bookbinding. The other day I saw him bag a coach-whip snake all of 7 feet long.

As for my host—Robert Heyward Barlow—he is obviously not the Richard you knew, nor can he place that person as a distant kinsman. But he surely is a great boy. He always evaded statements regarding his age, but it now turns out that he *only turned sixteen last Friday*. The little imp! Thus he was scarcely 13 when he first corresponded with me. But for the handicap of poor eyesight (which he will try to have corrected on a northern trip next autumn—when he will meet Belknap & the N. Y. gang) he might be a worthy parallel of the unpronounceably surnamed Ruth in his differing lines of endeavour! Never before in the course of a long lifetime have I seen such a versatile child. He is a writer; painter; sculptor; printer; pianist; marionette designer, maker, & exhibitor; landscape gardener; tennis champion; chess expert; bookbinder; crack riflshot; bibliophile; manuscript collector; & heaven knows what else! You ought to see the bas-relief of one of my fictional monsters (*Cthulhu*) which he made some time ago from common Florida clay—that & the statuette of the elephant god Ganesa (prototype of Belknap's *Chaugnar*) which he is making for an amiable, eccentric old fellow (William Lumley—also a correspondent of Klarkash-Ton's) in Buffalo, N. Y.! Bobby is the younger son of a retired army colonel now nervously broken down & visiting relatives in the North. He has a brother a decade older than himself—an army lieutenant at present stationed in Texas. It develops, amusingly enough, that we have a strain of ancestry in common—both having descended from the Rathbones of Block Island, R. I. The present household, in addition to little Ar-Ech-Bei & the felidae & opossumlet, consists of Mrs. Barlow, an elderly housekeeper, & the latter's really gifted middle-aged son—Charles Blackburn Johnston—whose paintings excite my unaffected envy. The Johnstons are *Virginians* of rustic origin, & speak a broad southern dialect.

Among our diversions have been several trips to ancient places of

the sort I dote upon . . . including a Spanish sugar-mill at De Leon Springs which antedates 1763 (vide enc.), & sundry sites & reliques at New Smyrna on the coast. New Smyrna is celebrated as the seat of Dr. Andrew Turnbull's plantation of 1768, where indigo & other subtropical products were cultivated by labourers (Minorcan Spaniards, Italians, & Greeks) imported from the Mediterranean. It was named in honour of Dr. Turnbull's wife—a Greek gentlewoman from Smyrna. After some success, the enterprise failed through labour troubles resulting from over-strict overseers—the workmen being finally (1774) released from their indentures & settled in St. Augustine (where their descendants still live) by order of His Britannick Majesty's governor. Turnbull's ruin was completed by the re-cession of Florida to Spain in 1783. He then went to Charleston & became the leading apothecary there—founding a pharmacy at the corner of King & Broad Sts. which yet survives, & at which I have frequently purchased vanilla ice-cream. Of the Turnbull plantation no trace survives save an old irrigation canal, which still runs its course beside New Smyrna's main street. A more picturesque New Smyrna relique is the vine-clad, oak-shaded ruin of a Franciscan mission built in 1696, partly destroyed by South Carolina troops in 1706, later used as a sugar mill, & finally abandoned. Many stately walls & noble arches of coquina stone remain—the effect of the whole, in conjunction with the tropical background & marks of the jungle's reconquest, being picturesque & exotic to the highest degree. . . . .

By the way—I trust you did not miss a glimpse of the dashing E. Hoffmann Price when he recently rolled up in his well-seasoned tree-climbing Juggernaut to pay his respects to Klarkash-Ton. A fascinating chap—you may recall my mentioning his presence in Providence just prior to your own advent there. He is now settled (as long as he can settle anywhere) at his parental home in Oakland, Cal.—& it is likely that the recent visit to Averigne will not be his last. . . . .

With every good wish,  
Yr obt Servt HPL

706. TO DUANE RIMEL

De Land—

June 17, 1934

My dear Rimel:—

Your recent recurrent dream of vast wheels and spheres is certainly extraordinary, and I hope you can eventually make literary use of it. The extended cup is surely a tantalising phenomenon. No—I never had any of the fever-dreams (of the turning and rolling of vast bulks) which you mention, though I often dream things of the most bizarre and vivid sort—some of which I have already incorporated into tales or verses. The only well-defined delirium I ever had was in 1903, when I was twelve years old and suffering from an exaggerated cold. I then (my mother said afterward) mumbled things about flying to Mars and Saturn. As for the nature of dreams—I think there is no question but that they consist of dissociated scraps of previous impressions (some utterly forgotten and ordinarily deeply buried in the subconscious) regrouped by the undisciplined sleeping fancy into new and sometimes utterly unfamiliar forms. Their surface aspect is strange, yet every basic ingredient is something the mind has picked up at one time or another . . . from books, pictures, experiences, etc. I don't believe in hereditary memory at all. Acquired characteristics are not ordinarily inherited; and even if they were, they would be merely general tendencies—certainly not the special, individualised impressions involved in that curious sense of unaccountable familiarity which some scenes or dreams awake in us. Yes—I have often had that sense of previous knowledge of things absolutely new to me, but in most cases I have been able to trace it to very early and largely forgotten impressions. For example—a certain village landscape at sunset looked familiar when first I saw it, and I eventually traced it to a picture I had seen in virtual infancy. Vaguer dreams of pseudo-memory—the sort involving strange cyclopean cities—usually refer back to forgotten bits of reading or pictures, more or less combined in a new way. However—for *fictional* purposes it is quite all right to adopt such false but attractive explanations as reincarnation, hereditary memory, and so on. I do myself!

Yrs, most cordially,  
HPL



707. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

St. Augustine, Fla.,  
June 21, 1934.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... The cats at De Land were all prospering when last I saw them; though one—Jack—has been through a trying experience. He was missing for a day, & when he turned up again he seemed curiously ill. All sense of balance was gone, & he lurched & staggered like a feline toper! As he grew stronger, he seemed anxious to visit a neighbouring clump of palmettoes near the lake—where, it was discovered, lay a small snake ... dead, & with a somewhat tooth-mangled cranium. Undoubtedly Jack had chosen this reptile for his prey, & had become poisoned by his ophidian feast. He's coming out all right, though. Of the little 'possums, only one managed to survive for any length of time, & even he succumbed in the end. He received the name of Henry, & graduated long before his demise from medicine-dropper nutritive methods. At another place in De Land I saw the most exquisite black kitten—a tiny atom, but wildly playful—that can be imagined.

..... Early in June I visited a most impressive spot—Silver Springs, some 60 miles from De Land. Here is found a series of placid lagoons whose floor is riddled with vast pits 30 to 60 feet deep, & covered with curious marine vegetation. In many places divers have encountered the huge bones of prehistoric animals, & one pit contains the remains of a weed-grown ship's boat—associated by local legend with the early Spanish explorers. I saw these varied wonders from a glass-bottomed boat. Out of the lagoons flows the Silver River, as typical a tropic stream as the Congo or Amazon, with tall palms, trailing vines & moss, & bending cypresses along the swampy banks. Alligators, turtles, & snakes abound, & on either side the jungle stretches away uninterruptedly for miles. It is here that the cinema of *Tarzan* was photographed. I took a 10 mile launch trip on the river, & could easily have imagined myself in the heart of Africa. Am now in ancient St. Augustine—at the same quiet hotel I patronised in 1931. Staying a week—an utterly fascinating town!

Best wishes—  
HPLovecraft

708. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

San Augustin, Fla. Oriental,  
25 de junio, 1934

Dear Ar-Ech-Bei:—

.....  
.. As for my diet—admission fees, booklets, and cards have so crippled my purse that I'm down to the canned goods and cookie diet which I described to you. Today my total food bill has been 16¢, as follows: Dinner: can beans 6¢. ½ pkg. ginger wafers 2½¢. Total dinner, 8½¢. Supper: ½ pkg. ginger wafers 2½¢, 1 cup ice cream 5¢. Total 7½¢. Total for the day 16¢. Yesterday I went up to 20¢, since Heinz spaghetti is 10¢ per can. In this way I can get by quite fairly—and I'll follow the same programme elsewhere. At 20¢ a day, my weekly food bill is only \$1.40 instead of the previously allowed \$1.75. And the 6¢ beans occasionally bring it under even this modest figure! Study your grandpa's methods and learn how to live cheaply!

Yrs. in semi-darkness—  
Ech-Pi-El.

709. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

St. Augustine, Fla.,  
June 28, 1934.

Dear Helen:—

.....  
It would seem to me that the cure for a feeling of oppression like yours—oppression at the thought of inevitable human losses, & the often meaningless ceremonials attending the disposal of mortal remains—ought to lie in an increased sense of *objectivity*, & a heightened realisation of the true proportions of the universe & of the insignificance of mankind & all its affairs therein. There is no need of drugging oneself with immortality-myths in order to be tolerably contented during the brief span one lives. If we had never heard of the extravagant

promises of the various religions, & of the sentimentalised conception of human ties based upon these promises, we would not be so disturbed by those inevitable results of change which we know must come to all. There is no reason why anyone *should* be sure of retaining all the landmarks—either human or non-human—to which one has grown used & of which one has grown fond; so that the realistic analyst accustoms himself from the very first to the idea of tantalising impermanence in every department of life. Parents & friends die; beloved houses & landscapes become hopelessly altered or destroyed; social milieux & other environmental supports decay & become metamorphosed; & one's self grows old, exiled from the beauty, vividness, & adventurous expectancy of youth, & doomed to be a more or less impatiently tolerated onlooker. These are the basic & inescapable conditions of life—but just *because* they are basic & inescapable we can build certain palliatives or defences against them. Knowing that nothing & nobody is certain of lasting, we can wisely refrain from pinning too much of our hold on life to any one object—human or otherwise—or limited range of objects. We can cultivate the *sense of pageantry & panorama*, & think of the terrestrial scene in terms of historic movements & races instead of in terms of specific individuals. Not that we need to abandon all kindness & affection toward individuals; but that we ought to remember how transient & infinitesimal all individuals are, & to avoid making our entire sense of equilibrium & contentment dependent upon the life & proximity of a few definite persons. The stream of race & tradition is deeper, stabler, & more important than the atoms which compose it. Memory & objectivity join hands in making existence a little more tolerable. When we bring ourselves to realise that *time* is only one element in an infinitely complex cosmos, we tend to protest less when something that *is* becomes something that *has been*. The difference between *is-ness* & *has been-ness* tends to vanish—we feel that the mere quality of duration does not amount to so much after all. Why should a thing be *immortal* in time, when the basic fact of its *having existed* is virtually equivalent so far as the larger universe is concerned? The difference between a friend who *has lived* & one who *still lives* is not as vast as one might imagine. Both exist as images in the mind, & may be regarded with equal affection. The same is true of a house or scene or other beloved object or condition. Of course, the change is unfortunate; for a past object does not impinge as respon-

sively on our consciousness as a present one; but philosophy teaches us that a certain amount of unfortunateness is absolutely inevitable. When we are all braced to expect, as a matter of course, a certain amount of misfortune, we are infinitely better able to bear it. We know that virtually every pleasant thing must pass—so when one goes, we console ourselves by enjoying the many other pleasant things which are generally left. The greater our philosophic & aesthetic expansion, the more sources of contentment we shall generally be able to find in life. When we lose individual things, the drama of the whole racial pageant is left to us—and so on. And so with the tragedy of personal ageing & of changing milieu. In these matters the great healer is the ability to become predominantly objective—to cease to think about oneself—or one's relation to the surrounding pattern—at all, but to cultivate an impersonal *spectator's* interest in the dramatic seething visible on every hand. What if one's familiar landmarks *are* wasted away? What if one *is* grey & ugly & stranded in the listless, beauty-bereft deserts of age or middle-age? The sense of deprivation in such cases is infinitely lessened by a sort of psychological self-annihilation—a decision *that one no longer exists at all* except as a spectator, in a darkened auditorium, to an external drama. As soon as one completes this self-annihilation, he can regard the external pageant with a genuine interest but little tinged with regret at his own lack of a pleasant connexion with it. Then, too, there is the tremendous refuge offered by pleasant aesthetic & intellectual activities, either creative or appreciative. This boon really has three separate phases, any one of which can be a substantial aid. First, there is the inestimable benefit of *merely being busy* with something which one is able to consider worth doing. When we are busy at anything at all we generally have no time to brood over our misfortunes. Second, our activities are often intrinsically pleasant & satisfying—sometimes poignantly so. And third—a great deal of art & philosophy is consciously & specifically of a consolatory or escape-opening nature. That is especially true of the weird art of which Klarkash-Ton & I are so fond. The real *raison d'être* of that art is to give one a temporary illusion of emancipation from the galling & intolerable tyranny of time; space, change, & natural law. If we can give ourselves even for rather a brief moment the illusory sensation that some law of the ruthless cosmos has been—or could be invalidated or defeated, we acquire a certain flush of triumphant emancipation com-



parable in its comforting power to the opiate dreams of religion. Indeed, religion itself is merely a pompous formalisation of fantastic art. Its disadvantage is that it demands an *intellectual* belief in the impossible, while fantastic art does not.

After all—for the average person life is not by any means as bad as it might be. Of course, real *happiness* is only a rare & transient phenomenon; but when we cease to expect this extravagant extreme, we usually find a very tolerable fund of mild contentment at our disposal. True, people & landmarks vanish, & one grows old & out of the more glamorous possibilities & expectancies of life; but over-against these things there remains the fact that the world contains an almost inexhaustible store of objective beauty & potential interest & drama . . . . all at the disposal of anyone philosophic enough to go through the process of psychological self-annihilation. To divide one's interests & affections rationally; & to get so interested in the drama of what's going on that one forgets one's own part—or lack of part—in the environing turmoil—those are the secrets of sensible living. We would not resent the inevitable greyness & disappointments of life so much, if religion & sentimentality did not so viciously teach us to expect more. This false teaching of orthodox tradition is something which ought to be done away with—though I hope it can be disposed of without destroying other & really valuable parts of our traditional heritage. To sum up—if one can be sensible & realistic, there's no reason why one shouldn't have a decently good time out of life if one can be sure (as I wish to *hades* I could!) of an income equivalent to \$10.00 a week till death.

Regarding funerals & interments—there are two sides to the matter. On the one hand, it is undeniably appropriate that relatives & friends should have a chance to register their esteem for a deceased person; but on the other hand, the existing ceremonies (conducted over a decomposing corpse which has scant meaning after the *person*—the *mode of motion* in the brain cells—has ceased to exist) are frankly barbaric & superstitious . . . . originating in savage rites designed to make cadavers stay put in their graves instead of stalking stiffly among the living by night. To my mind, *cremation* is the only sane & tasteful way to dispose of a body—and it surely ought to be done without publicity or ostentation. A non-religious *memorial service* might in many cases be highly appropriate—but if not sympathetically determined by circumstances, & it certainly ought not to emanate around any material

fetish so coarse & unimaginative as an urnful of calcined phosphates or a coffin-full of glassy-eyed nitrogenous carrion mends! However,—life is so trivial at best that it doesn't pay anybody to worry about the ultimate disposal of his bones. What does it matter what happens to the cast-off reliquiae of any one atom in the cosmos? The person himself no longer exists—so the business is of no primary concern to him. They can dump my carcass down the sewer for all I care—I'll be out of it! Of course there is an element of aesthetic appropriateness which may justly give each individual certain wishes in the matter of his final rites, & I heartily endorse the idea of leaving instructions regarding such. I'd advocate cremation, & a non-religious memorial service for family & very close friends only. My point is that the matter isn't really important enough to worry about—especially when one is young & not likely to be a subject of mortuary rites for 60 years or more. I am reminded of an argument with a friend some years ago on the topic of burial—he was only 40 & in good health, but was actually acutely worried about the sort of funeral he would get. Himself a sturdy agnostic, he felt that he could not stop his very proper Methodist wife from giving him an orthodox funeral—and the notion preyed on him. I simply laughed him out of his perplexity with a reiteration of the query "what of it?" Would the irony of such a thing be any greater than any of the numberless ironies & inconsistencies of life? As a rational cynic, conscious that he would not be existing when his wife staged her harmless circus over his reliquiae, he ought to be amused rather than distressed at the prospect. Of course, it would be all right to leave instructions—maybe his wife *would* follow them after all . . . & maybe he'd outlive her . . . but surely there was no use in getting excited over trifles . . . & anyhow, he might not die for another forty years! Well—he saw the point, & joined me in my smiles at the matter. He's six years nearer death now, & his wife is still alive & pious, but he doesn't worry any more! He just shrugs his shoulders & leaves the whole thing to Fate—which is, in the last analysis, about all anybody can really do about anything! And so I'd advocate others to do. There are enough worries in life without carrying them over into death. What we don't know won't hurt us! . . . .

The case of your friend who became a communist is certainly pathetic in the extreme—though it must not be thought that all communistic belief is synonymous with deterioration. Actually, there are

many persons of the highest character & most impeccable background who honestly think that a general communistic programme forms the only ultimate solution of the present breakdown of capitalism—a belief which they derive from the abstract & impersonal study of national resources & their distribution; & which does not, of course, necessarily involve any endorsement of the sudden social changes & absurd formal *ideologies* advocated by the orthodox Marxians & discontented European riffraff. Such persons do not wish to see all traditions & settled ways of living ripped up indiscriminately, but they do feel that mankind will not be able to continue its civilisation unless its stagnating inequalities of resources & opportunities are eventually diminished through some far-sighted plan of distribution & some adequate way of enforcing that plan. To them, some sort of communism (in each case suited to the history & traditions of the race involved) seems the only way to enforce a civilisation-preserving economic plan—hence they believe it will have to come in the end . . . . though without any wholesale repudiation of general folkways & preferably without any violent revolution. The number of these honest & analytical communists or semi-communists seems vastly on the increase, & I cannot but fear that they will play into the hands of the wild & unscrupulous bolshevik upheavers. But they must not be confused with the disintegrated personalities who revolt savagely against civilisation & clamour for a totally new order. These philosophic *communists* are not to be found in Greenwich Village or the ghetto, but in some of the choicest & most dignified American homes—I've just encountered one amongst the most ancient & settled stock of St. Augustine! I don't agree with their equalitarianism, but I have to admit that they are honest theorists rather than morbid emotionalists or savagely atavistic *rebels*. When a whole economic order is perishing through evolution & changed conditions—as *laissez-faire* capitalism is now doing under the impact of the machine age—it is no wonder that *every* possible substitute is soberly considered by responsible, intelligent, & impersonally far-sighted persons. Thus it is erroneous to fancy that there must be something the matter with anybody who believes in communism—that he must be a criminal, a foreigner, a savage throwback, or a psychopathic case. It is true, of course, that criminals, foreigners, throwbacks, nuts, & fools *do* flock to the banners of *any* cause even remotely connected with upheaval & change—since their disorganised & inferiority-conscious

minds, so inadequate in *this* civilisation, always have a pitiful feeling that they'd be better off under *some other—any other—*regime. But the converse is not true—for there are many sincere advocates of change who are not at all inadequate under the dying order, & who call for modifications not from any personal standpoint, but simply because they perceive that the present system is unable to survive in the long run. They want a new order speedily or gradually installed, so that a general collapse to savage disorganisation & anarchy may be avoided. To sum up the matter, one can't condemn a whole theory or point of view merely because one has encountered some unfortunate or undesirable individuals connected with it. Attitudes & perspectives & race movements are greater than any of the individuals exemplifying them.

For my part, I hope it will not be necessary to resort to communism; since so much of the communistic programme—including its most culturally destructive parts—wastes its energy on the quest for an *absolute equalitarianism* which is *not in the least necessary for the restoration of economic equilibrium*, & which indeed has many intrinsically undesirable features. Some change *must* come, since in an intensely mechanised world *unsupervised* capitalism leads inevitably to the grotesque cornering of resources, & to an increasingly vast amount of *permanent* unemployment, even in the most *prosperous* times. Belknap is right *thus far*. But to my mind, the gradually modifying influences of a programme of government supervision of wealth & industry—a programme involving *no major social or cultural overturn*, but resembling rather old-time socialism, modern fascism, & the Roosevelt New Deal carried somewhat further—will solve the problem infinitely better . . . . & infinitely less destructively . . . . than any new *ideology* or ruthless *proletarian dictatorships* could even begin to do. In the case of the United States, I believe that the only way to secure a workable economic order is to begin modifying in a small way, & gradually increase the scope of governmental control before either the crazy old-line Republican "individualists" or the equally crazy modern bolshevik malcontents can have a chance to wreck the whole works. Just how far it may be necessary to go, nobody can say at the present moment. I fancy the government will eventually have to take over & operate on a nonprofit basis the larger utilities & industries, yet do not see why a small-scale retail capitalism cannot linger on indefinitely. It seems to me that the present administration—despite a few of the errors un-



avoidable in any programme of experimentation—is moving in exactly the right direction; so that until it exhibits some very contrary tendency, I can be quite accurately set down as a thorough Roosevelt man . . . . & this despite the fact that my forbears were without exception Federalists, Whigs, & Republicans in the respective days of those parties (or modifications of a party).

But all this does not, of course, make the case of your friend any the less disastrous & pathetic. It seems very clear that she was the victim of an unsettled, ill-adjusted temperament from the start; & that with her, communism was merely an incident in a sort of neurotic revolt against normal surroundings. I doubt if any alien taint in her heredity could be held responsible, since biology does not work in such conveniently explicable channels. It is really more folklore than fact to suppose that all anti-social or anti-cultural tendencies in a person are due to "bad blood" or to a "foreign" or "peasant" heritage. Actually, our social & cultural attitudes are infinitely more environmental than hereditary; whilst foreign or peasant blood seldom predisposes one toward any aberration therefrom. If an inferior strain\* in one's ancestry exists, it is much more likely to make one merely stupid or vicious or both—within the accustomed social circle, than to inspire any especial divergence therefrom. In general—and especially in countries where stratification has never been rigid—arbitrary social caste is seldom much of an index to intrinsic superiority or inferiority. Cases of individual deterioration of various kinds (in some purely nervous, in some mental, & in some emotional—producing a wide variety of eccentric, aberrant, & occasionally repulsively anti-social types) occur constantly in the best of families—including the very oldest & most unmixed; so that it is needless to look for a foreign or socially inferior element in any subject's heredity. Indeed—even if such an element did exist, the chances would be only slight that that was the real cause of the deterioration. I could cite a pitiful number of cases of personal disintegration which have occurred in households of the most unquestionably fine ancestry—indeed, the most pitiful case of all was one in which the heritage involved was the least open to question. Incidentally—when we reflect upon the strong elements of ruthlessness, selfishness, arrogance, & self-

\* by that I mean *genuinely* or biologically inferior—i. e., with definitely malorganised brain-tissue or definitely coarse or twisted emotions.

indulgence which—together with good manners, taste, intelligence, responsibility, & a certain sense of honour—once formed a typical part of the aristocratic character, we need not wonder at the degenerate specimens now produced by the old families . . . . specimens in whom the old instincts of self-gratification & unrestraint are forced by social change to seek new outlets. The wonder is that old-time aristocratic blood does not constitute a definite taint! This is especially true of the very ancient & immemorably ruthless & vicious aristocracies of continental Europe.

In most cases, though, I fancy that personal disintegration is caused by factors far more real—individual physiological accident, especially as affecting the functioning of the obscure endocrine glands on which most of our emotions & personality depend, & unfortunate accidents of environment caused by lack of understanding of the subject's particular nervous type. In the case of your friend, I'd imagine that she had a badly working nerve & gland system to start with & that she may or may not have suffered through lack of this scientific application of the best psychological treatment. Probably no *known* method of treatment would have been of any use, so that one may refer the trouble altogether to obscure physiological malformation or malfunctioning. Now while of course hereditary accident—the way the genes & chromosomes of thousands of ancestors known & unknown happened to get juggled in her especial case—must have had something to do with this trouble, it would be fallacious to attribute the thing to any *specific* hereditary cause such as foreign blood. That's not the way these things work—as we may see by the vast number of similar cases where heredity is unquestioned. All we can say is, that when the countless varieties of germ-plasm that form even the best of us get combined in a certain way—a way absolutely impossible to foresee, even by the strictest eugenicist, & therefore absolutely impossible to avoid once in a while—the result is an individual with faulty nerve & gland functioning, & therefore with emotions departing from the race's recognised norm. Other causes of this individual aberration are wholly recent—disease acquired & transmitted by parents or immediate ancestors; congenital malformation of the embryonic or infant subject; physiological accidents to subject involving organic lesions or traumata, & so on. The race will always breed its pitiful odds & ends, & these will always be doubly pitiful when their aberrations are linked with lofty heritage or

distinguished in intellectual or aesthetic capacity. We weep at a tragedy like the late Hart Crane—but find a saving grain of comedy when aberration is linked with stolidity or mediocrity, as in the case of my unwashed Drunkard caller of an hour ago. What a piece of work is man!

Yr obt hble Servt  
E'ch-Pi-El.

710. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Home in old CHARLESTON  
June 29, 1934

Hail, Lord Ghu:—

..... Had some good luck at the Y—I blew into Charleston at 3 a.m., and meant to wait out the night without paying an hotel bill; but the generous old night clerk let me have *free*, for the residue of the night, the room I had engaged for the *next* night! I hadn't expected that—but the joke is that, for me, this gives 2 *full* nights for the price of one; since I wouldn't have hit the hay till 3 a.m. or so anyhow! Will leave Charleston with about \$23.00 or just under—not so bad, considering. Still on 20¢ a day for food, but off the canned stuff. Morning—5¢ cup of ice cream. Evening, 10¢ bowl of Mexican chili and another 5¢ cup of ice cream. ....

Regards to all.

Yr. obt. Grandsire, HPL

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